

THE UNITY IN AESTHETIC EFFORT IN INDIAN PAINTING

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The co-operative effort of the Hindus and Muslims is easily recognizable, in the production of Indian architecture but it is comparatively more difficult to find Muslim co-operation in Indian sculpture and portraiture. Muslim theology forbids portraiture and music although the fact remains that the Muslims are among the best of Indian musicians. But as far as sculpture is concerned, I am not aware of Muslim co-operation.⁽²⁾

Indian sculpture was always in co-operation with China, Tibet, Gandhara, Java and other areas of Greater India and practised the give-and-take policy. We have always been attracted by the Tung-H cave painting of thousand Buddhas and the sculpture of Lung Sen in China; the metal figures of Tibet and Greater India are equally attractive. The same

principle of give-and-take has been practised between Europe on the one side and the East and India on the other in many a different way. Various arts and crafts have invariably flourished wherever there has been catholic contact between Indian culture and the cultures of other countries. But we shall refrain ourselves from this general discussion to-day and limit ourselves to the combined effort of the Hindus and Muslims in India in their aesthetic self-realization.

The European artist finds his chief attraction in the material form of man and nature; the ideal of Indian art is to express the *dhyana* and *bhava* of humanity. The better artists of India were not ignorant of the physical peculiarities of man and nature but their chief aim was directed towards *bhava* and *dhyana* (*vide* Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, pp. 22-26, 55).

(1) Shreeyukta Kshitimohan Sen is famous in this country as well as in foreign lands as one of the most penetrating and versatile *savants* in Indology and especially the Hindu-Muslim co-operation in the spiritual self-realisation of the Middle Ages. His studies have often led him away from his main subject and the present article shows with what thorough historical and aesthetic grip, he has dealt with the different elements and aspiration which culminate in the production of the world famous Mughal miniatures, and their influence on Western Art. —Translator.

(2) Islamic theology (not the Koran) places a ban on all pictorial representation of living beings—men, animals,

insects, etc. As is well known to the lovers of Persian and Mughal paintings, this ban could not always succeed in stifling the aesthetic expression of the Muslims, but the ban on three dimensional representation was never disobeyed. That would have amounted to making idols and supplying material for veneration to idolators and as such committing one of the major sins. It will be remembered that the Prophet Muhammad destroyed all the crude idols in the Kaba at Mecca they were more three dimensional symbols of deities than realization of any aesthetic experience. —Translator.

The living material of Indian Art is her religion, her *bhava* and *dhyana* and along with them the external nature, and it is unimaginable that any one should accuse India of having borrowed them from Greece or Rome. (*ibid*, p. 168).

When the Indian missionaries went beyond her borders they were accompanied by artists and craftsmen, and many of the missionaries were themselves artists. They stood in no need of inspiration from Greece and Rome nor was there any possibility for it. Indian art went to China, Tibet, Ceylon, Java and other areas in its pure form and that is why we find the Ajanta style well-established at Sigiri in Ceylon, Nara and Haryuji temples in Japan (*ibid*, pp. 169-170, 172-173). Indian art was established amongst the Mongols in the same way. It must be remembered that although missionaries are often narrow-minded in their vision, artists are liberal in all ages. There is no caste distinction among the artists nor is there any difference of religion—they are always Catholic in the widest sense of the word. (*ibid*).

Some have doubted the role of the Mongols as carriers of Oriental traditions in art to Europe and this has found expression recently in a book written by E. Blochet in French on the history of Islamic art from XII to XVII century.⁽¹⁾

According to M. Blochet, the living material of all aesthetic achievements is either Greek or Roman, that the inhabitants of Central Asia were backward culturally, and, finally, although they are slightly indebted to China, they have borrowed their palette and technique from Occident. These views may have had some currency once upon a time but are entirely unfounded to-day.

European scholars are always busy in trumpeting the indebtedness of Indian artists to Europe, but are the Europeans not indebted to India, in any way? Has not a vast wealth of aesthetic treasure flowed into

Europe right from the time of Alexander's invasion and all throughout the renaissance in the Middle Ages? What a myriad of artists and craftsmen have accompanied the barbarous Huns and Mongols in their invasions in Europe! The influence of the East on European art and architecture reveals itself in many a different field, and it has been narrated *in extenso* by the connoisseur Havel. (*Ibid*, pp. 183-186.)

Discussing the Mughal miniatures, Havell points out the fact that many of the master-pieces of Rembrandt in Lovre and London Museum are copies or adaptations of Indian miniatures. Professor Sarre has proved it convincingly in his monograph on the subject by comprising the reproductions of the original Mughal miniatures with Rembrandt's pen-and-ink sketches. Rembrandt was living in Amsterdam in the year 1631 which was the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company. The employees of the Company used to bring to this port large collections of Mughal miniatures (*ibid*, pp. 202-204). Rembrandt was a genius of great originality but there is no doubt that he was a real *connoisseur* of these Oriental miniatures (*ibid*, p. 204), which he did not hesitate to copy or borrow from. Professor Sarre has proved that Rembrandt is indebted in many ways to the wealth of Indian techniques.

During the first millennium after Christ, Oriental thought and art were spreading in Europe. Asia happened to be the centre of gravity at that time and as such was the chief natural source of art and inspiration. Byzantine and Gothic art are born of the unity between the Eastern and Western thought. The mosaic of St. Mark in Venice clearly shows the influence of Indian traditions on it.

The renaissance of painting in Persia during the Mongol period owes its origin to Chinese influence. Buddhist missionaries had taken art traditions of India with them to China shortly after the beginning of the Christian era. This *entente cordiale* between the Indian and Chinese arts reached an unprecedented height in the VIIth century A.D. According to

(1) Mussulman painting, Twelfth to Seventeenth Century, by E. Blochet, Tr. by C. M. Binyon with an introduction by Sir E. D. Ross.

Dr. Anderson, European painting of the period between seventh and thirteenth century cannot be compared at all to the magnificent wealth of the Chinese painting of this period. (*ibid*, p. 187).

The Sino-Indian art then united itself with Iranian art and returned to India through the court artists of the Mughal Emperor Babur. Muslim theology had stifled many of these aesthetic activities; although the Mughal Emperors could not give them complete freedom but in any case, succeeded in loosening some of the fetters which had restricted completely all movements of aesthetic life.

The technique we had noticed as children in painting the clouds, sky, trees and plants on the marriage seats in the Bengal villages was the same as those employed by the Chinese and Kangda artists. It is probable that this unity was brought about by Buddhism. It bears close resemblance with the technique of the lamas of the Tibetan monasteries.

I have seen paintings of Heaven, Hell and such subjects painted by the Tibetans. They sing and exhibit such paintings depicting Buddha, Heaven, Hell, Yamaraja, Yamaduta, etc. It used to be the custom in Bengal also to exhibit such pictures from house to house. Although many of these Buddhist-Hindu itinerant minstrels (*Patuas*) have become Muslims, it is still their profession to do the same. Some name these pictures (*pats*) Ghazi's *pats* to-day; nevertheless the subject-matter and the songs sung with these pictures are exactly the same as in the past. As children we have heard the Ghazi *pat* songs:

To the right and left sit Yamaduta and Kaladuta
And in the centre sits the mother of Yamaduta.

The Ghazi possesses all the virtues!

Their salvation lies in the Ghazi, O, brother!⁽¹⁾

Many of these minstrels singing the Ghazi *pats* are professional painters. These *pats* are painted

according to Tibetan tradition and the techniques of India, China, Tibet and Himalayan regions are found in them.

The emperors of China used to collect the portraits of the prophets and saints of different countries. Emperor I Tsung had one such picture of the Prophet Muhammed in his possession in 872, and when a descendant of the Prophet, one Ibn Wahhab saw it, he could recognise the Prophet in it. It will be discussed in a different context.

The Mughal court used to employ both Hindu and Muslim artists. They received high patronage from Emperors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan. They used to paint natural scenes and illustrate traditional historical events on walls and in manuscripts. Many books of Persian verses have been illuminated by them, and their miniature painting defies all comparison. As, however, Islamic theology forbids the pictorial representation of human beings or gods in a place of worship (tomb, etc.), these artists could not exhibit their skill in such places. (*ibid*, pp. 188-89).

Except for a few fragments in Fatehpur Sikri, almost all the mural paintings of the Mughal period have disappeared. But the great master-pieces of this period can be seen till to-day in the illumined Persian manuscripts. The episode of Hamza consists of fourteen parts and fourteen hundred verses, and with what wonderful specimens of miniatures are they ornamented! So is the case with Chengiz-nameh, Jafar-nameh, Razm-nameh, Persian Ramayana, Nala-Damayanti and Panchatantra in Persian, Ayar Danish and other manuscripts. In selecting the subject-matter of these aesthetic creations, no question about their Hindu or Muslim origin was ever raised.

The best representation of the typically Mughal period is to be found to-day in its miniature painting. It is indeed surprising that the paintings executed on hand-made Chinese or Indian paper have survived after centuries even to this day. (*ibid*, p. 189).

The artists of this period painted animals, trees, plants and many other objects of nature as also

(1) It is obvious that the recognition of the existence of the Hindu mythological figures like Yamaduta is pure heresy from the Muslim point of view.

—Translator.

illustrated historical and mythological stories. Often one artist would draw the lines and another would fill in the colours. Hindus and Muslims co-operated freely in executing these works.

The technique of oil-painting was not prevalent in the Mughal period. Paintings were done on walls, manuscripts and *pats*. The last named used to be kept rolled up and opened and seen on special occasions and enjoyed by the *connoisseurs*. There is a very costly illustrated Babur-nameh in the British Museum collection. The Razm-nameh in the possession of the Maharaja of Jaipur was made at the instruction of the Emperor Akbar and it had cost him a sum of six lakhs of rupees. Both in India and Europe there are private and public collections of Mughal miniatures. (*ibid*, p. 197).

The early Persian paintings are extremely stiff and frozen. This is due to the fact that the artists were not permitted by the ancient canons of aesthetics to learn their lesson directly from nature. It was during the period of Akbar and Jehangir that the artists made an effort to get rid of this rigidity. (*ibid*. p. 195).

There are some Mughal Miniatures of the XVIth century in the Calcutta Art Gallery which clearly show the direct Indian influence on them. In 1534 the Khorasani Painter Shapur executed a miniature depicting a dance scene in the court of Sultan Muhammad Tughlak which clearly shows the direct influences of Ajanta on it. There is a lively joy and communion with nature in it which is very rare in the earlier paintings of this country. And what exquisite colour-combination! In the rhythm of its composition in colours and lines we seem to see before us the art of Ajanta and Borobodur. (*ibid*, pp. 190-191).

Some are of opinion that the art of landscape painting came to India from Europe but it may be that India took a leaf from China which practised this art much earlier than Europe.

Abu'l Fazl has left a biographical list of the artists in Akbar's court. He has mentioned three of them

with special care. The first amongst them was Mir Sayyid Ali of Tabriz. He was known as Juddi and was a poet of renown. It was he who illustrated the Amir Hamzah manuscript. The second was Khawajeh Abd al-Samad who hailed from Shiraz. The third was Daswant (Yashovanta) and was a *Kahar* or the son of a palanquin-bearer by caste. He was madly devoted to the art of painting from his childhood and practised it on every conceivable object. Akbar came to know about this genius and brought him into contact with Abd al-Samad. Yashovanta came to be known as the greatest artist of his age in a short time. He has painted many a wonderful picture. The fourth was Basawan who was also a Hindu. In certain aspects he surpassed even Yashovanta. (*ibid*, pp. 194-195).

Thirteen more artists are mentioned by Abul Fazl amongst whom there are both Hindus and Muslims, viz. :—

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| 1. Keshava. | 2. Zal. |
| 3. Mukunda. | 4. Mushkin. |
| 5. Farrukh. | 6. Madhava. |
| 7. Jagan (Jagannatha). | 8. Mahesh. |
| 9. Kshemankarana. | 10. Tara. |
| 11. Shyamala. | 12. Hari Vamsha. |
| 13. Rama. | |

The work of many of these artists are found to this day in scattered art-collections. Akbar (the guiding spirit behind these painters), used to say "The artist should paint after directly experiencing the beauty of nature. Unless Life itself is painted the picture does not become alive."

The Victoria and Albert Museum contains 110 miniatures of the artists of this age in the fragment of Akbar-nameh in its collection. There are miniatures of Basawan with his autograph in this collection. (*ibid*, p. 195).

Paintings of Farrukh are superb but they are executed in Chinese style which is an extremely natural phenomenon with the Mughals.

Sharif Khan, the son of the artist Abd al-Hammad was highly honoured at the court of Jahangir. The artist Abu'l Hasan, son of Aka Raza, was 'loaded with great favours' by the said monarch. The fame of Mansur has also been narrated by the contemporary authors. Abu'l Fazl, however, has not mentioned Abu'l Hasan and Mansur: It is probable that they attained fame after the completion of *Ain-i-Akbari*. (*ibid*, p. 198).

Jahangir's love for painting was of an extraordinarily unusual type. He was also a *connoisseur* of painting. Jahangir claims to have been capable of naming the artist from his work; if several artists had been at work in the same picture, he claimed the skill of detecting each from his lines. It is hard to say whether Jahangir was such a *connoisseur* as he claimed, but it is certainly true that the miniatures we find to-day bearing his seal are by far the best masterpieces of his age.

The delicate and tender brush of the artists of the Mughal period is still one of the major wonders to all artists of the world.

In the year 1621 artist Ghulam painted a miniature and named it "Prince Murad, son of Shahjahan, on the elephant Iqbal". In it, interest is concentrated on a great elephant amongst several more which has evidently become unruly, as he is flourishing the *mahout's* goad in his trunk and trumpeting with rage. The Prince Murad has climbed on his back and is trying to bring him under control. Very rarely indeed does one come across such a superb specimen of picture pulsating with life.

Towards the beginning of the XIIIth century, the great Persian poet Sadi travelled in India. It is very probable that some of the Indian artists drew his portrait at that time. The one in Jahangir's collection is an excellent specimen of the most lively portraiture. Sheikh Sadi himself has left an impressive art gallery of Indian life in his famous book of verse "Gulistan".

A painting of two white *saras* by Ustad Mansur belonging to the reign of Jahangir (1624 A.D.) is a subject of wonder to all, even to-day. Another portrait of a Turkish Mughal bearing the seal of Jahangir is also probably a work of the same master. There is also a pheasant in the Rotchild collection in Paris which also appears, in all probability, to come from the same brush. It was done in 1625 and has been reproduced by Percy Brown in his *Indian Paintings under the Mughals* on page 146.

Thus it is obvious that the Mongols did not carry fire and destruction before them as Goths and Vandals did. Their invasion brought freedom to many an art and literature from old bondage and instilled new life into them. It is true that the Mongols did not spare any religion which came face to face with them, indeed, they destroyed the Mussalman empire in Persia, but at the same time it is equally true that the contribution of the Mongol invasion to the Persian literature, and arts has by no means been negligible. It has been put in excellent language by the famous historian of Persian literature, Professor E. G. Browne:

"Infinitely destructive and disastrous as it was to life, learning, and civilization, and especially to the Arab culture, which as we have already seen, maintained itself with such extraordinary vitality in Persia for six centuries, long after the war of Arab conquest had utterly subsided, the Mongol invasion did, perhaps, contain some quickening elements, and the Mongol character, for all its reckless ferocity, some potentialities of good. One of its few good effects was the extraordinary inter-mixture of remote people, resulting in a refreshing of somewhat stagnant mental reservoirs, which it brought about. In Europe it was a cause if not the chief cause of the Renaissance, for it thrust the Ottoman Turks out of the obscurity of Khurasan into the prominence of Constantinople and was thus ultimately responsible for the destruction of the Byzantine Empire and the dispersion of the Greeks and their treasure into

Europe. . . . And within Asia, it brought together, first in conflict and then in consultation, Persians and Arabs with Chinese and Tibetans, and confronted, on terms of equality which had not existed for five or six centuries, the Doctors of Islam with Christian monks, Buddhist Lamas, Mongol "Bakshis" or medicinemen, and the representatives of other religions and sects. (pp. 441-442) (*ibid*, p. 181-182)."

The coming of Pathans and Mughals into India meant the fusion of many a culture and art technique. This led to the unprecedented accumulation of aesthetic wealth during the Mughal period. Among the artists who achieved this miracle are both Hindus and Muslims. Akbar's court had only two Muslim painters—the rest were all Hindus. They again belonged to many different castes, e.g., *Kayasthas*, *Chitera* (chitrakar:—Painter), *shilavat* (*shila-shilpi*:—Sculptor), *khati* (*kashtha-silpi*:—Wood-engravers), etc. Besides Yashovanta, mentioned before, there were three more artists of the *kahar* or palanquin-bearer caste. It is thus obvious that even the 'low-castes' were represented among the artists.

Many great artists flourished in Kashmir and Gujarat during the Mughal period. Among those belonging to Gujarat, Bhima, Sura and Keshava are particularly well-known.

Mughal art reached its crescendo during the reign of Jehangir. Percy Brown has given a list of the artists of the Mughal period—consisting both of Hindus and Muslims—in the appendix to his famous book mentioned before. (*ibid*, pp. 195-198). Although the Hindus outnumber the Muslims, their number is by no means small.

The list of Mughal artists given to me by Shriyukta Nandalal Bose contains the names of 108 Hindu masters and 91 Muslim masters.

At the end of the Mughal period began the European period, the major part of which can be termed as English period. The Indians forgot their own treasures during the earlier part of this period and imitated European pictures. Subsequently Shriyukta Abanindranath Tagore discovered our own path. His eminent disciples, Surendra Ganguly and Nandalal Bose received the torch from the master and went ahead. Great loss has been caused to our art-endeavour by the untimely death of Surendra Ganguly.

There are both Hindus and Muslims among the modern artists of India. As the names of the Hindu artists are fairly well-known, some of the Muslim artists of the new age are mentioned here.

Hakim Muhammad and Sami al-Zaman are the two Muslim disciples of Acharya Abanindranath Tagore. Abd al-Rahman Chughtai is the disciple of Shriyukta Samarendra Gupta. Zain al-Abidin is a student of the Calcutta Art School. Among the students of the Kalabhavan at Santiniketan under Nandalal Bose are Abu'l Kalam of Jaipur, Muhammad Hasan Ali Mian of Mymensingh and Saiyyid Fazl al-Rahman of Bolepur (near Santiniketan).

In order to make the list of the artists of the modern age exhaustive, mention has to be made of Kaviguru Rabindranath Tagore who cannot be said to belong to any school. But his perfection lay in himself.

Translated by Dr. Syed Mustaba Ali, from Bengali article in "Desh", Vol. 44, September 6th, 1947.

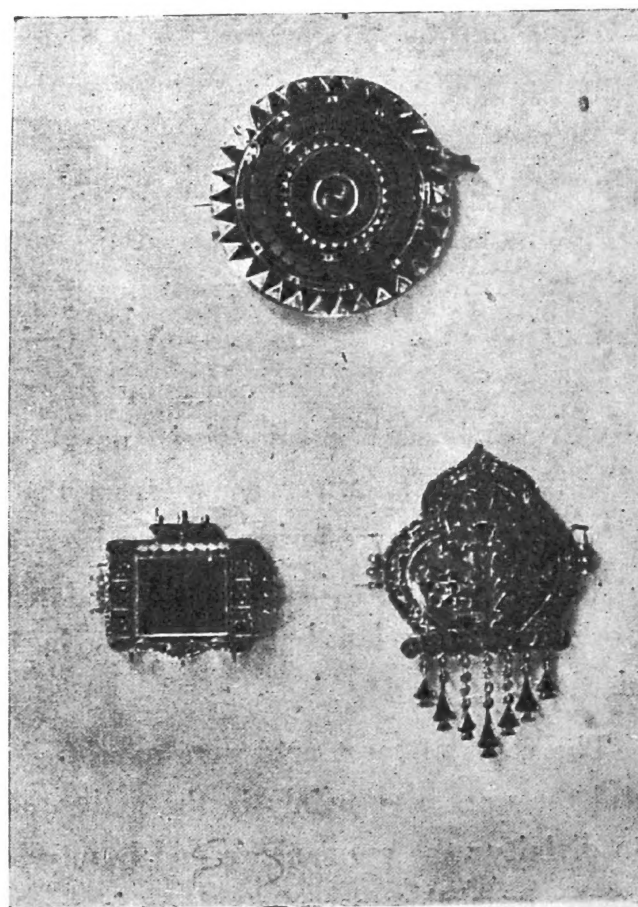
ON A SENSE OF DEDICATION IN WORK

Marcella Hardy

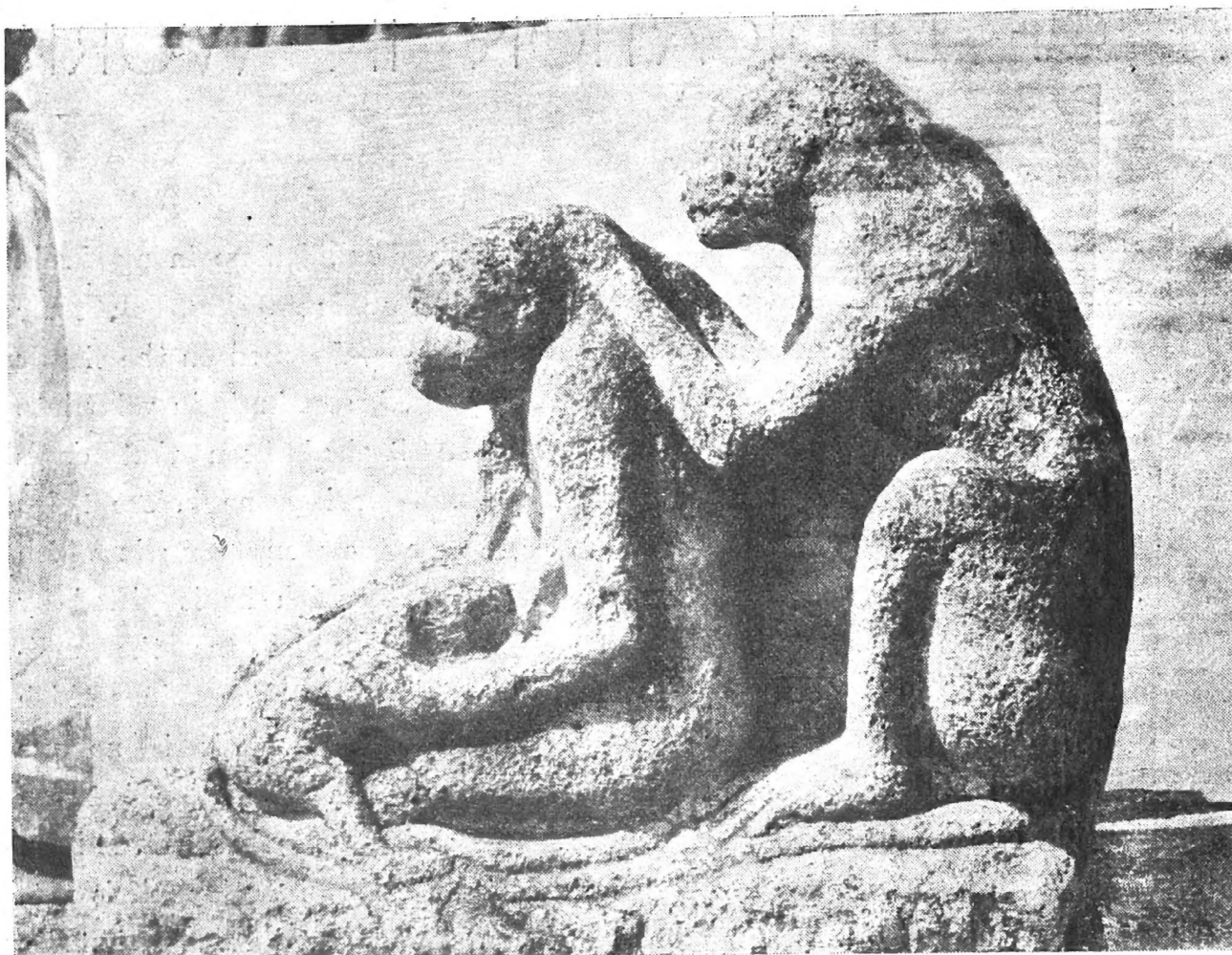
I remember, once while I was still at that downright age when criticism of elder's little idiosyncracies and the wisdom they endeavour to impart to the young was something of a solemn and imperative vocation, listening with ill-concealed condescension to the morning 'talk' of an idealist turned headmaster of a model school. The subject of that morning's talk was the wisdom and forethought of Nature—for those were the days when her rediscovery demanded the use of a capital N—in providing young things with the necessary conditions for growth, and their mothers with the instinct to care for them, and in the case of some species, with the amazing craftsmanship that built cosy nests, pottery huts, leaf cradles, all neatly sewn up, and so forth. The idealist also talked about the beauty of things done for service and not for gain, of the perfection of the tiniest flower, the tints of sky and stone, the song of birds. As he talked I writhed with discomfort at being subjected to such 'baby talk'—a feeling rather akin to that expressed with such cruel wit by Voltaire after reading the ebullitions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Even at that early age, however, I had already lived long enough in the midst of unadulterated Nature, to sense and therefore to resent as a reaction, the truth that lay behind the headmaster's sentimental words; there was a sort of response inside me, but it was a tempered response, for the idealist had omitted the cruel aspects of Nature which I had known intimately, while painting what seemed to me a pallid picture of the immensely deep aesthetic as well as ethic experiences that Nature can vouchsafe.

At the time, of course, I did not realize what it was that had so irritated me in that morning's talk; it was only in later years when I was myself within the borders of that deplorable realm of grown-up-hood that, quite inconsequentially, the meaning of

that painful fifteen minutes bubbled up in my brain and sent me day-dreaming and reflecting. By some process of association of ideas, I mused on the simple wisdom that had been poured, seemingly in vain, into our rebellious ears—for it had been that day's especial amusement to fall mock-prone before twigs and blades of grass—on to the many ways in which Man answers the urges with which he is gifted by fashioning the material around him for the well-being, or amusement, or worship of those things which he loves better than himself. And it is no use protesting here, that there is a distinction between ordinary man and the artist, and that a true-born artist fashions for his own self-satisfaction: it is not, for his mortal body and mind that he works, but for his immortal soul which is his noblest aspiration—in the most unlimited sense, and pardon the word, his divinity.



*Enamelled
Jewellery*



Monkeys

MAHABALIPURAM

It is, indeed, this sense of dedication to the highest and the best which can inspire with immortality a piece of human work. It is this sense of dedication which is instinct in the masterpieces of the ages of genuine religious fervor, in those works where the artist has sought only the truest interpretation of what he felt was finest in him, in those works of simple craftsmanship whose only conscious aim perhaps was to afford the experience of pride that the fashioning of one's best can give. It is no wonder the creators of art remained anonymous as they had dedicated themselves and their work to this noble cause. When a prayer comes from the heart, or a gift is made as an offering of oneself, neither he who prays nor he who gives himself up trumpets to the world of his action but is content in having done his duty.

The roots of most arts were nourished by religion, and the work was mainly in the nature of an offering to divinity; the permanence and beauty of such work comes from the fact that there is more than mere

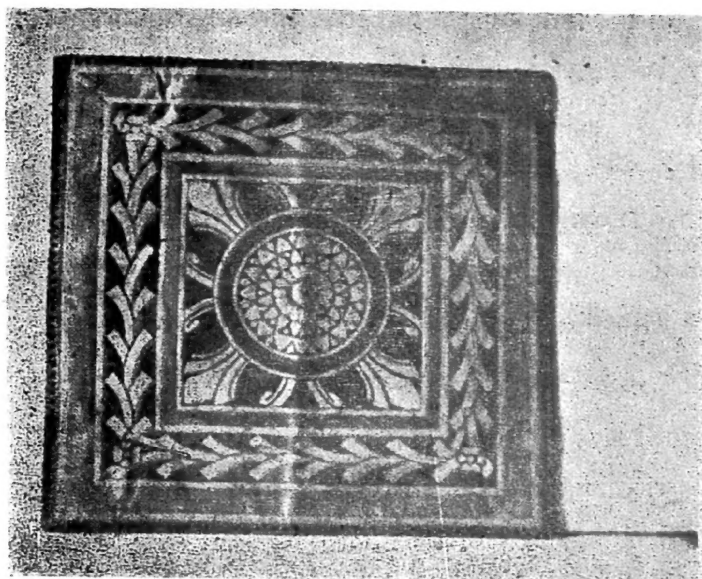
workmanship in it. Its manifestations are innumerable, as varied as the things Man can make, for it is not merely in works of avowed religious purpose that one should look for this spirit of dedication: it is also found in the humblest of crafts.

While still in those years of impassioned scepticism, I had often wondered with hostility why it was that some of the churches of medieval Europe were so beautiful whereas our houses were so ugly; why it was that the paintings of the Italian, Dutch, and Spanish schools, extracted admiration from me even in their non-secular subjects; and why oratorios and classical music moved me so deeply, and why one admired hand-made objects in which every part was as meticulously finished as that which the eye could see. Broader knowledge and reflection brought with them a measure of deeper understanding of the endeavour to interpret that "something" beyond and above, would not be denied the expression. Though the finished article might far too often be a mere parody of the inspiration, the spirit of dedication that



Winter

K. M. Paniker



Leather Cushion-Cover—hand tooled

pervaded it did none the less transpire and give it quality.

The joy of life so often reflected in peasant art is another form of this dedication; it does not come from a desire to show the countryside to the city, nor does it spring from a desire to obtain higher prices; a viand prepared by a loved one is superior to that prepared to order. As different is the small garment sewn by the mother for her unborn child from the baby clothes sewn in rescue centres and uplift schools; as different is the portrait of a patron from a vision perceived in moments of absorption; as different is a piece of command music from the strains of melodies heard in the musician's inward ear. But it is fatal to copy rustic designs and imagine that the naive beauty is preserved, just as it is fatal to copy the work of a great master and consider the result equal to his, or copy a sculpture of the Gupta period or the bronzes of South India and expect the effect to be as moving. It was the spirit in which these works of art were created, quite apart from the craftsmanship, that gives them their quality; just as it is this same love of the work which is, too, a dedication, that redeems even a clumsy piece from the realms of mediocrity. In the same relation of pride in work to work for money stand the inlay work and tracteries of Agra and Delhi to the

tourist pieces that have been made there during last many decades; so, too, is the genuine Kashmir craft superior to the commercial products found in almost all the cities of the world; so, too, is it with the crafts of China and Japan.

Reverence for the tools that are used in producing good work is inherent in the care bestowed on them when not in use; for, there are few surer signs indicative of degenerate craftsmanship than the neglect of tools, just as neglect of oneself in not bothering to keep clean is often an indication of mental degeneracy. Tools and simple household objects and utensils that are loved are often adorned with quite lovely designs; the work expended on handles or blades, on boxes or pots is by way of being an offering to the tool and its work and is, in that measure, worthwhile when it shows itself in refinements where these are not immediately necessary nor materially profitable. It is as though the craftsman felt there was an all-seeing eye for whom the smallest detail was important and that only the best could please. The symbolic shapes given to musical instruments, too, have some association with this sense of dedication which inspired the instrument-maker. Who knows but that in moulding his material, he may not have unconsciously sensed the exaltation, possibly shared in it, of the artist who would one day create music from it?

Though the beauty and efficiency of a good machine cannot be denied, nor can it be denied that



*Beaten
Copper
flower
Vases*



Decorated Pottery Vases—hand made

it saves countless human beings from hard labour, yet the very “everybody-ness” of a machine renders its products soul-less and robs them of that element of inspiration which differentiates a creation from a reproduction. The machines themselves may be works of art because many of them were not designed originally to make money, but as an offering by the inventor to his toiling fellow-beings; it is what machines can do which is marvellous, sometimes, but what they do has no inspiration for humanity. Strangely enough, just lately I came across a “Comment” in an excellent journal which echoes—although in another connection—something of what I am trying to express. “. . . in both”, it says, “we take a vegetable revenge on the machine which robs the worker of the pleasure of craftsmanship and sets a standard of efficiency (the telephone, or traffic lights) with which ordinary human beings cannot compete. Descending deeper still he (the profound moralist) would find that the advance . . . is characteristic of the terrible transitional epoch in which we live, a generation which has destroyed God and not known how to create man”. “Man without God is immensely lonely”; the journal says further, but by “God” should not be understood merely that “thing” to which we address unfelt formulas when the occasion requires such boring practices. The meaning of the much abused word is probably as varied as there are

thinkers, and even as there are human beings, for what may be consciously defined in the one, may be unformulated though none the less a real experience in the other—the result in both cases is that what is done as an offering to God or as an offering to what is noblest in one self, call it inspiration or sincerity, contains a spark of the immortal, and consequently, has beauty.

In these days which is “modern” to call the Atomic Age, most inspiration has taken refuge in the seclusion of studies or dens; it is far too seldom felt to be the birth-right of the person who works for his living whether in handicrafts, in the factory, or the office. True, neither the factory nor the office are designed these days to foster inspiration, rather is a replica of the machines they use the standard set to the workers—but at least among the handicrafts one might be justified in hoping for it. In its largely morbid seclusion, inspiration has become so complex, that it loses itself in a net work of conflicting loyalties and top-heavy theories; it has lost much of the gift of simple humility for fear of this being too trifling, too unsophisticated, not up-to-date. In fact, inspiration seems to have forgotten its own meaning, which it mistakes for head-line plus-value, or for scavenging; having lost its bearings, inspiration has nothing to which it can dedicate itself.

That is perhaps why so much that it is produced to-day is out of date to-morrow or by the evening of the same day, whereas one can still look with a pleasure on humble pieces of work that were done by people who may have been less efficient than sincere, but people who dedicated their work to something beyond and above and for whom nothing but their best was good enough.

All the specimens of handi-work are designed by V. R. CHITRA.

ANDHRA AND PALLAVA ART OF SOUTH INDIA

T. N. Srinivasan

The earliest development of Indian Sculpture and Painting like that of the drama, appears to have been very closely connected with ancestor cults and hero-worship. The *Chitra-Lakshana*, a very ancient and perhaps of the earliest treatises on “*Silpa Sastra*,” now known only in its Tibetan translation, the only copy of which is preserved in the famous Saraswathi Mahal Library at Tanjore, is devoted to the description of the various details relating to the proper method by which a Monarch or *Chakravarthi* should be portrayed—the canon is set for kings and other beings (gods and other divinities). So much so, the earliest pieces were portraiture of important personalities and divinities.

By even the eighth century B.C., philosophical speculation of India had advanced to such a degree that doctrines of *Karma* and *Samsara* had come to be accepted in broad outlines and by contrast with the merely temporary advantage of rebirth in a heaven, *moksha* or *nirvana*—salvation with immortality was recognised as the highest spiritual goal of man. The meaning of life was to be found in the realisation of the self and the recognition of the soul, for which the wise and the cultured laboured hard in the early centuries of this era. This yearning found finest expressions in the Upanishads and later in Buddhism and Jainism and in the other individual Brahminical systems.

Buddhism—the cult of the Gautama, caught the imagination of the people and spread rather very wildly and far and wide. This was responsible for a similar awakening in the art development of our Country. The beginning of Buddhist art appear to

be associated with the memorial monuments (*chaityas*) erected on the sites of the four great events of the great Buddha's life and in other important places. Funeral mounds (*Stupas*) were already erected over the divided remains of the great Teacher for he himself is said to have spoken before his final Nirvana that every true Aryan should visit these four places with religious emotion. Such of these sites was represented by a special symbol and taken collectively, these formed the real background of the future art development of our country. The four places are :—

1. Kapilavastu connected with the birth and early life of the great master, symbolised by elephant, lotus, bull, horse, etc.
2. At Bodhi Gaya where he attained the *Nirvana* or the great Enlightenment, the symbol used was the *Bodhi Tree* with the famous rail.
3. As the first preaching of the Buddha was at *Sarnath*, the image of the wheel with deer or lion became associated with it.
4. Lastly, the final *Nirvana* was represented by the *Stupa*, which was first connected with the place *Kusinagara*.

To this early Sunga period (185-80 B.C.) must be assigned the earliest sculptures in India—of which the more significant are the sculptured railings at Barhat, the balustrade and plain railing at Sanchi, the early sculptures at Mathena, the sculptures at Amaravati, and the Chaitya halls at Guntupalle, Ajanta (Cave X and IX) and the early Jaina caves at Udayagiri in Orissa.



*Mahisha-
sura-
mardhini* e
**MAHABALI-
PURAM**

So far as South India is concerned, the most outstanding example of Andhra dynasty is the famous sculptures from the *stupa* of Amaravati. This small village stands on the southern bank of the river Kistna in Guntur district, and is said to represent the ancient city known as *Dharanikota*, a place which was considerably important even as early as 200 B.C. Here one of the finest *stupas*, richly decorated existed till about the eighteenth century, when an avaricious landholder used the broken pieces of the *stupa* for a lime-kiln. However a good portion of the monument still survived and has since been preserved.

The original chaitya at Amaravati can be said to belong to about 200 B.C. and the casing

slabs and the great railing and also a few of the Buddha images date from atleast the second century A.D. but not later than 250 A.D., as is revealed from the inscriptions mentioning the Andhra Kings and the testimony of Taranath, the historian of Buddhism. The railing is the most elaborate known piece of fine ornate sculpture, which was about six hundred feet in circumference and stood some fifteen feet above the pavement level. As usual, it consisted of pillars connected by crossbars, standing on a plinth. Each crossbar was superbly decorated with lotus reliefs infinitely varied in treatment, and the plinth and other pieces were elaborately decorated with a long undulating garland supported by men and animals. It is considered that

nearly about seventeen thousand square feet of rock was covered with sculptured reliefs, was painted throughout with fine vegetable colours. The whole was a masterpiece of superb design, charming and perfectly natural in every detail, and formed perhaps one of the most splendid example of artistic skill known in the history of the worlds fine arts.

The school of *Vengi*, which was first inaugurated at Amaravati in the second century B.C. was followed up by the Andhra rulers at Nagarjunikonda, Alluru and Gumadidum. The fineness of the sculptures was considerably improved and were marvellously utilised in the sculptures at Nagarjunikonda, which is considered to belong to the second century, A.D. Equally significant were some of the Jaina sculptures

recently discovered at Danavulupad in Cuddapah district, where fine Jaina images were obtained. On the whole, it may be concluded that the earliest pieces of sculpture, especially in bas-relief were done in the period of the Andhra dynasty, whose zeal for Buddhism was reverberated in these monumental creations of Art.

In the fourth century A.D., the Imperial Gupta dynasty established itself with its capital at Pataliputra—the Modern Patna and this marked the beginning of a new epoch. The line of able and distinguished monarchs of the Gupta period ending with Chandragupta II, more popularly known as Vikramaditya, contributed a lot to the artistic development of our country. The Gupta supremacy



*Vishnu as
Ananta shesha-
murthi*
**MAHABALI-
PURAM**



Stupa at Amaravati

continued till the seventh century, when the Great Harsha (606-47) reduced India from Narbada northwards under his sway, while the Deccan submitted to his able contemporary Chalukya ruler Pulakesin II, who was defeated by the Pallavas in 642 and about 650 A.D. Harsha died childless, leaving his vast Empire a prey to anarchy.

The Gupta period was the golden age of India, when political power and abundant wealth provided the physical medium for that unique mastery of life, which marked the culmination of the civilisation of our country. The entire country was for the first time spiritually and intellectually one and a fundamental unity of experience and character transcends all political, racial, linguistic and sectarian distinctions. Vedic ritualism, a survival from a remote past, and primitive Buddhism, correctly interpreted by medieval Hindu thought as a kind of heresy were no longer State religions: in their places, Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism and Mahayana Buddhism—the religions of devotions to Vishnu, Siva, Devi, Buddha were becoming popular day by day and received royal patronage. Images and temples appropriate to each of these persuasions of Hinduism appear in profusion and determine the leading forms of all later types of imagery and

architecture. Iconography and theory of music and dancing were perfected and codified. We no longer meet with primitive qualities or *Naivete* in Indian Art and there was a general awakening of art traditions from the Himalayas to Ceylon. "Buddhism is now completely fused with the national life; the Buddha figure, still extraneous at Amaravathi, has become an integral part of the architecture. The paintings at Ajanta reflect of the same abundant, exquisite, sophisticated, and brilliant life that forms the theme of Bana's famous *Kadambari*—Painting became one of the important accomplishments of kings and queens and Gupta art became the flower of an established tradition, a polished and perfected medium." It was during this period that marvellous monuments were erected. Among them, a few survived like the ancient temple at Bhitargaon, the caves temples at Udayagiri in Bhopal the temples of Deogarh in Jhansi district, at Mandor near Jodhpur. The paintings at Bagh and Ajanta belong to this golden age. The carvings at Elura, Elephanta and other places were done during this period. Contemporary with the school of painting at Ajanta, are the similar frescoes done in South India and Ceylon.

While India, north of the Narmada was under the sway of Harshavardhana in Deccan the Chalukyan Empire was magnificently ruled and further south, the Pallava Prince Mahendra Varman ruled the Dravida land, with Kanchipuram as his capital. In fact all these three monarchs were unequalled in prowess and they were great patrons of art and culture. It was during the reign of these Pallava rulers, who ruled between 400 and 750 A.D. that the earliest well-built monuments of South Indian art were completed.

It is believed that the Pallavas were once the vassals of the Andhras in the Vengi Kingdom and to have succeeded them as rulers in the third century. The Pallavas, whose origin is shrouded in a semi-divine union between a Prince with a Naga Princess,

were great architects both of land and culture. Their Kingdom spread almost throughout South India from the Kistna river in the north to Kanyakumari in the south with the capital at Kanchipuram which too, according to a famous Chinese traveller, extended from the present site of Conjeevaram to the mouth of the river Palar and the sea port of Mamallapuram—"Is so wide that at one end there was the capital and at the other the southern sea of India covering a three days journey."

Mahendravarman—the greatest of the Pallava rulers (600-625 A.D.) was a remarkable person with varied interests and considerable talents. According to Prof. G. Jouvean Dubreuil, the famous French scholar, it was he who first conceived the "idea of spreading in the Tamil country the mode of cutting temples out of rocks." He was highly cultured and it was under his directions that the first rock-cut temples was scooped out at Mandagapattu, in South Arcot district. An inscription found here states "This is the temple constructed under the orders of *Vickitra-Chitta* for Brahma, Ishvar and Vishnu, without bricks, without timber, without metals and without mortar", and it was Mahendravarman who was personally responsible for introducing the Cave style probably from the Kistna district. He is acclaimed as "one of the greatest figures in the history of TAMILIAN Civilisation". He was a patron of music alone—for an inscription in the Mamandur caves in the North Arcot very near the ancient capital of Conjeevaram, praises the poetical and the musical talents of this remarkable sovereign, who is also believed to have composed a musical treatise known as the *Manavilasa Prahasana* on dancing and also dealing with the music connected with this art. To this monarch, it is usually attributed the paintings at the famous Jaina cave at Sitannavasal, a village near Pudukottai. It was about this time that there was a great religious upheaval and spiritual awakening, which touched the hearts of the people. Though Buddhism was the prevailing creed, it was at this

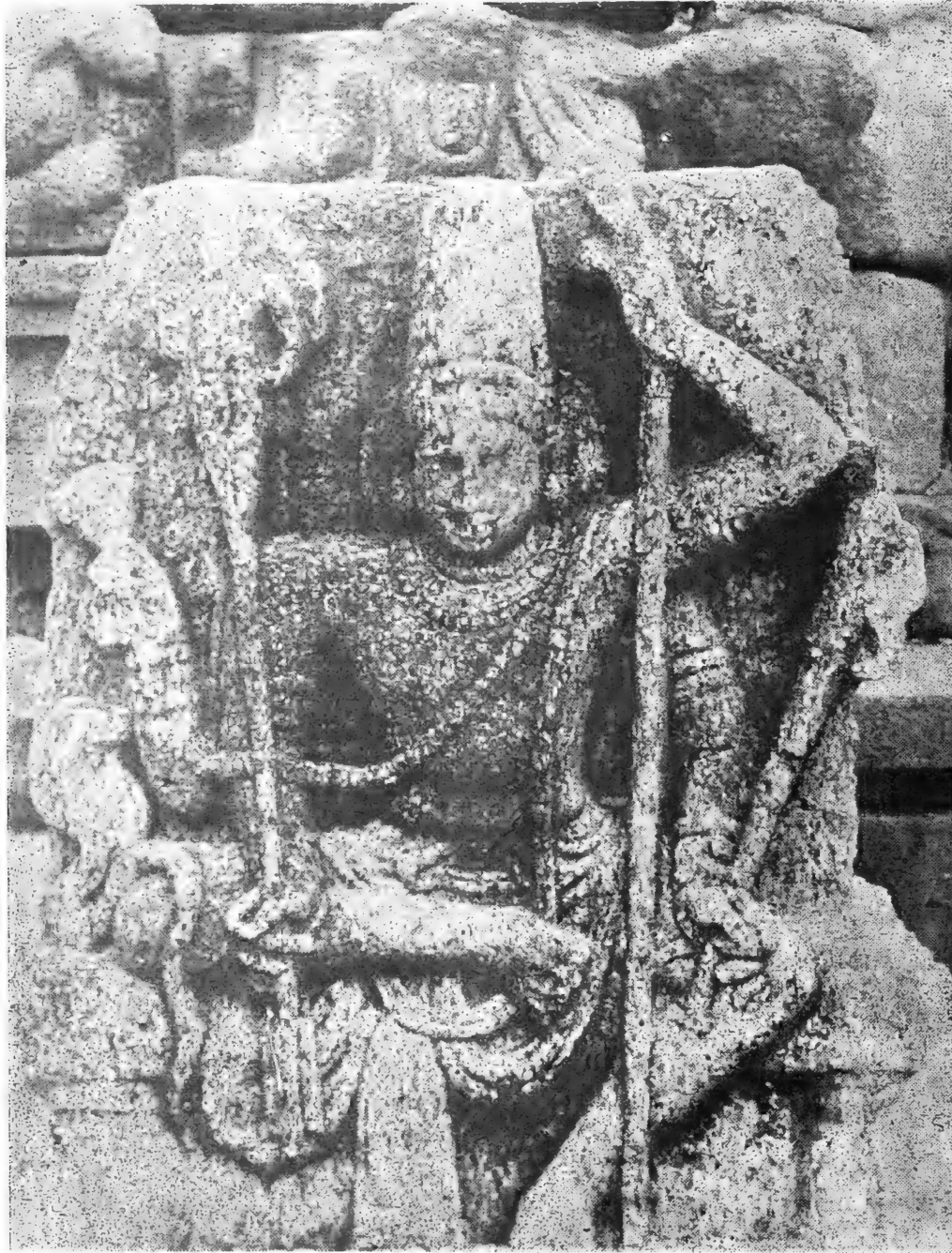
period that great musical bards like the Vaishnavite Azhwars and the Saivite Nayanmars appeared, whose compositions in Tamil resuscitated the *bhukti* cult. These popular compositions, now embodied in the *Nalayara Divya Prabhandam* and the *Thiruvachakam* and other treatises caught the popular imagination, which crystallised in the development of fine art in South India on a very elaborate scale.

The earliest art expressions were the paintings done by Jaina priests at the Sitannavasal cave during the reign of Mahendravarman the great. This temple was once covered with fine paintings, "Whose charms consist in the versatility of design and in gradation of colouring with the half tones and the light and shade". Only a portion of these paintings are now in existence of which such as those of the dancing nymph, the lotus tank are very remarkable and found the nucleus around which the art of painting developed in South India.

It was during the period of his successor Narasimhavarman. (625-650), that the greater part of the work on the cave temples in Mamallapuram and the five famous 'rathas' seem to have been excavated. The excavated shrines containing the representations of Krishna raising the mount *Govardhana*, the great *Mahishasuramardhini* and the Vishnu as *Anantasayanamurthi* are all attributed. In the Varaha cave is a fine series of well-carved out magnificent reliefs representing the Varaha-Avatar, Gaja-Lakshmi, Durga and the Trivikrama Avatar. The five rathas at Mamallapuram are all monolithic pieces, cut out of huge boulders and of them, the so-called Bhima Ratha has the typical elongated barrel-shaped roof, so characteristic of the Dravidian type of architecture. Draupathi Ratha is a small square shrine with a square curvilinear roof like that of the modern thatched cottages so typical of Bengal. The Arjuna Ratha illustrates well the simplest form of the Dravidian temple. These world famous rock-cut temples are still fresh and stand as silent testimony to the eminence that the Pallava Sculptors had

attained at such an early age in the history of fine art. They are well-proportioned in spite of their gigantic dimensions and exhibit the interest that royalty took in their birth.

mandapam, whereby the Pallava style became more evolved and further elaborated. But the most conspicuous among the Mamallapuram reliefs of this period is the great bas-relief representing the descent



"Mahadeva"

MAHABALIPURAM

The family taste for chaste architecture survived in the descendants of Narasimha Varman to whom it is attributed the erection of the famous *shore temple* near the sea at Mamallapuram. This is a finely-built temple but constructed out of cut pieces of granite, as different from the monolithic caves of his royal predecessors. This shrine has a pyramidal tower, which was later developed into the Gopuram of the South Indian temples with a flat-roofed pillared

of the Ganges. Here a huge piece of rock itself becomes material as well as theme. A sheet of rock nearly a hundred feet in length and fifty feet in breadth has been made plastic with sculptured figures of deities, human beings, Nagas, animals of all kinds. Bhagiratha is represented as an emaciated yogi, and the cleavage between two rocks has been well-utilised to mark the descent of the sacred river—Gangavatarana. The depiction of the ascetic cat standing



MOTHER

By R. N. CHAKRAVERTY

erect, with trustful mice playing at his feet, animal studies like the pair of colossal elephants are no doubt masterpieces of animal sculpture and it is considered that this is the biggest bas-relief in the whole world and the effect is most impressive and must have been so, when the reservoir below was filled with the flowing water.

To Rajasimha is also attributed the construction of the famous Kailasanatha temple at Kanchi, where the shrine is more elaborate with a central shrine representing the *Sanctum Sanctorum* for the presiding deity with a *pradakshina* corridor round it and a *mukha mandapam* in front. Other Rajasimha temples datable between 700-720 A.D. include the great temple at Panamalai, and the cave shrine at Saluvankuppam.

During the reign of his successor Nandivarman (about 750 A.D.), the temple of Vaikuntaperumal at Conjeevaram appear to have been constructed. This temple is of a very peculiar type as the central shrine is built in three tiers, one over the other, in each of

which there is a shrine dedicated to Vishnu. In the lower most floor, the image of Vishnu is in sitting posture, while in the first floor, He is represented as *Anantasayanamurti*, while in the top one, He is of Bhoga attitude in standing posture. A flight of steps leads one to each story in which provision is made for the *pradakshina* corridor and *mukha mandapam*. This is very elaborately done and shows the rapid advance the temple architecture had attained during the Pallava period.

At about the beginning of the ninth century, the Pallava power in South India began to wane; they were slowly over-powered by the Cholas, who succeeded them. But one thing must be accepted—It was the Pallavas that gave this part of our country, the first impulses in art and it was due to their royal patronage that very many of these magnificent edifices were brought into existence—”. During their age, the simple shrine became more elaborate and this marked the beginning of the future more complex models of South Indian temple architecture.



A PLEA FOR VISUAL EDUCATION

B. N. Ghatak

I am tempted to offer some remarks on the very interesting discussion initiated by the author of the article, "To Begin with"—(*Silpi*, June, 1947) where the writer has attempted to diagnose the malady in our cultural equipment which prevents learned scholars and intellectual giants of our day from deriving any pleasure or knowledge through the Visual Arts—the valuable *lingua franca* of all democracies. The writer has also made some random, if useful, suggestion by which our artistic talents could be trained and developed.

In the appalling state of our ignorance of the language of the Visual Arts every well-wisher of our national culture will thank the writer for drawing attention to a tragic gap in our education. For a long time, even in the twentieth century, any suggestion to include a curriculum of Art Studies in our educational institutions was considered a fantastic and childish piece of idealism, for "dolls" and "pictures" (statuary and pictorial Masterpieces) were looked upon as the playthings for the children and our education for the grown-up severely avoided them—and confined itself to the "Three R's". Generally-speaking, there is very little scope for training the eyes and the visual faculties, in our schools and colleges. Of course, almost all the secondary schools (I do not know if the primary institutions too) provide for drawing classes, but there is little provision to develop the discriminative vision in the child for Form and Colour, to help the student to grasp the qualities and elements of Beauty and Harmony in a work of Art and to develop powers to distinguish the good elements from the bad—in short to develop the critical eye to appraise and understand aesthetic creations. Among all the noble and valuable faculties which we are fortunate to inherit as God-given gifts

of Nature, the sense of beauty and the perception of harmony is perhaps the noblest, which should not be looked upon, at all as an idle luxury only to be indulged in by the rich. In every walk of life the efficacy of our aesthetic sense can be and should be well-applied for the betterment of our life and culture. From the practical point of view, Indian objects of Industry—those banal brutalities bereft of all beauties of Form or of Colour—are daily beaten hallow in competition with the foreign imports of even machine-made products. Even the most militant nationalists cannot be persuaded by a sense of insane patriotism to buy products—of Indian industries, machine-made, or hand-made. The utter lack of all principles of designs, of harmony, of colour, chide away even the Indian buyer not to speak of the foreign consumer. There has been a total loss of aesthetic sense from our national life, which we are not in a position to revive even by perpetual preachings of the doctrines of patriotism. The main reason for this is that the sense of beauty has to be stimulated and developed not only in our artists and craftsmen—who will make and shape the daily objects of our material needs but also in the buyers and consumers who will use them. So that, a buyer with a trained aesthetic sense is the best patron of our Arts and Crafts. Arts and Artists cannot flourish, in a society, where the members are dead to the appeal of good form and of colour. Consequently, there cannot be any perceptible change in fields of our Industrial Arts and Crafts by merely reforming our Art Schools and Technical Academies, but an attempt should be made to educate those who will use those products and this attempt should be made not by training the adults and grown-ups but should begin by opening and developing the eyes of our boys and girls from the very early stage of childhood, when the mind is still

in the formative and sensitive period and can be easily moulded and educated to any given ideal. The Art education programmes of Europe and America are really very praiseworthy, and in France there is a Ministry of Fine Art which deals comprehensively with all the phases of the problems connected with Art education of the public as well as of the students in the school. Even the English people, the least active in matters of art, arrange regular exhibitions, novel exhibitions and publishes beautiful photographs at a very low price which are easily available to the public. In this respect the authorities of the British Museum, the South Kensington Museum, and the Board of Education, London, do as much as they can. In America the scope is much wider. Almost all the bigger cities possess large and varied collections of Art and the young boys and girls in the schools are given opportunities to come in contact with and study them at regular intervals, and in this way their education is sought to be made interesting. The students are made directly acquainted not only with the greatest masterpieces of the Art of the World, which train up their eyes and develop their aesthetic sense, but they also visualise data of historical studies of all ages and countries in a stimulating and tangible form through these ancient relics of past ages. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York, at least a thousand boys and girls from various schools—throng together by turns, and receive their visual training. Besides every school has regularly hung up on the walls pictures which are replaced from time to time in order to train them up in the habit of perception of beauty so as to develop and refine their sense of perception of beauty through the eyes. Those amongst them who are gifted with the creative talent, are given all facilities for being, properly trained in the Schools of Art, but, generally, all students are given ample opportunities for cultivating their sense of sight and their power of apprehending beauty. I should like to refer here to the "Programmes for Art appreciation" an article

written by Frederick Allen Whiting (*The American Magazine of Art*: Vol. 23: No. 3: Sept. 1931). In it the writer has referred to the various aspects of the subject and to activities undertaken by different States in U.S.A. He has emphasised the co-operation between the libraries, clubs and Art Museums. On the practical side, he refers to a few points consisting of (1) enough technique to show the difficulties the artist in any medium faces; (2) enough historical facts to awaken the imagination as to what life was like in great periods; (3) enough biographical facts to illuminate a few great personalities among the artists of the past and to make clear why the time, the local condition, the training and personal qualities of the man made him the spokesman of his time and (4) contemplation and comparison of works of Art to develop an understanding of them. Any interested thinker who contemplates the spread of Visual Art in education may read this article with profit. Thus acknowledging this fundamental truth in the Science of Education, the Educationists of the West have based their system of education on a scientific and well thought-out plan which offers best facilities for an all-round culture and development of all the human faculties.

In this branch of education, it cannot be said that India has done much. But attempts have actually been made to introduce a completely new method of teaching in different provinces and Indian States. In November last the progressive State of Travancore has adopted a plan to introduce the teaching of Art in all stages of education from the primary schools to the post-graduate classes. A batch of teachers were sent by the Travancore State to undergo a special course of training of Art appreciation and visual educational methods under the special direction and care of Professor O. C. Gangoly of Calcutta—who has devised a very effective method of his own—which through the use of a large number of illustrative materials, photographs, picture post cards and lantern slides can open our eyes for beauty within a short time. A special committee has been formed

in Bombay to decide the possibility of introducing of Art subjects in every branch of educational activities. The activity of this committee has progressed much. But the most definite practical works seem to have been done in Bengal, and the Calcutta University is doing its best to popularise Art in the Secondary Schools. An appreciation course has been introduced in the Matriculation Examination through the suggestion of Mr. O. C. Gangoly since 1941. Through his suggestion, again, the Beltala Girls' School of Calcutta, the biggest High School in Bengal, arranged for a course of Art appreciation through a batch of trained teachers—with the use of illustrative materials. This Art course was attended by thousands of girl students. But this class had to be stopped on account of unusual conditions that were prevailing in the country during the last war. The School has again started a new Arts and Crafts Department. The University of Calcutta has also started a Summer Course of training classes to train Art teachers which has already trained more than thirty teachers. The Sister Nivedita Laukika Vidyalaya of Bhadrakali (Hooghly Dt.), though in its most initial stage, has made an honest attempt to bring Art and Education linked together within the ordinary School curriculum.

It will be easier to understand the nature of the work done in Bengal if we cite a few examples from the questions that are usually set in the Appreciation Course of the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University. The questions are divided into two sections—Practical and Theoretical. The Practical examination consists of Memory Drawings. The Theoretical section consists of questions on actual appreciation of paintings, sculpture and architecture, and the main Principles of Art, not only of India, but also of the countries of East and West.

Here are a few specimen questions—

Specimen No. 1:—What makes a Building an example of Architecture? (1941).

Specimen No. 2:—Describe the essential characteristics of Good Architecture? (1947).

Specimen No. 3:—What is the difference between a good and a bad picture? (1941).

Specimen No. 4:—What is the best European picture you have seen? (1941).

Specimen No. 5:—What is the difference between figures in the Round and Figures in Relief? (1941).

Specimen No. 6:—Distinguish between the characteristics of Indian Sculpture and Greek Sculpture (1947).

Besides, photographs of famous Indian and Greek Art, painting and sculpture, are cited in illustrations and the pupils are asked to judge them aesthetically and offer their criticisms.

Mr. Gangoly's valuable suggestions have been already carried out in practice at many places, specially in Bengal, where the University of Calcutta and other private institutions are doing a lot to train up young boys and girls from the beginning of their educational career. If any single individual has to be thanked—for valuable initiative in this new venture in educational enterprise, we have to thank Professor O. C. Gangoly whose rich collection of photographs, negatives, and slides can be utilised for a great national cause, to give free India, a new angle of vision, and to widen the scope of education—and cure it of its glaring defects.

THE ARTIST AND THE MAN

S. Sampath Kumar

Though the artist Ara is well-known in Western India and more especially in Bombay, very many in our country have not known or heard of him as much. To those of them whose natural inclinations are turned towards art and artists, here is a short introduction to that artist.

Krishnaji Ara was born in 1913 in Hyderabad (Dn.) of poor parents. His childhood days were spent in the midst of poverty and squalor. A little schooling, now and again, was all he received by way of formal education. But the one thing he strived utmost to have even in those early days was the constant and close company of paint, brush and canvas. In between times of helping his father and his school work he snatched all the spare moments to devote to art.

This inordinate desire born at the tender age of seven could not long be kept in check. And so it sought an outlet for wider fields and found in the city lights of Bombay the requisite answer. Not long thereafter he found himself in Bombay with more courage than cash. It was only the beginning of his trials and troubles.

Starting in Bombay as an household attendant and later as a motor mechanic, to sustain himself, Ara spent most of his spare time in painting. The road to recognition of his worth was not easy to come by. It was an uphill, painful and prolonged task, interspersed with varying fortunes in the progress.

It is perhaps fitting at this stage, that we should know him as the 'man' before we know him as an 'artist'. On Malabar Hill along the winding road to Government House, he lives in one of the single-room tenements. Here in this small room he cooks and eats, sleeps and works. It serves him as studio as

well, for the room is stocked with paintings and portraits, and incidentally, it is the rendezvous for the young men and women of the neighbourhood. It is just his lovable simplicity that attracts people to his small room. There all the youngsters talk all at once and fade into silence simultaneously. I realised that I could not go much deeper into the man at these late evening meetings but that I could probe at this *multi-faced* character if I met him alone.

One early evening I found him alone but engaged in painting. But he made me easy in his own disarming way by saying that work and interview could go on side by side. He was more than helpful, so I shot my questions and gathered material.

This diminutive, coffee-coloured artist had a philosophy all his own—a philosophy born of the early sufferings. For all that, his sensibilities have not been blunted but quite the contrary. They are refined and quick to react sympathetically, and warmly to the needs of others. The pattern of life of a genuine creator that is not moulded by the ordinary standards and which is drawn in different hues from the beginning is naturally not easy. Ara's pattern is no exception. An artist, according to him, expresses life in his art. He creates and recreates until his creative imagination finds its true impression in the canvas before him. "The artist's job is to express as much of what he feels in as few colours and lines. It is not necessary to have the same colour but the artist must express the character of the sitters. In doing this he must be an expert, for, giving character is, to me, the most important element in portrait and requires much time, labour and study."

"People's idea that perfect lines and perfect anatomical creations are the depiction of real life is

something with which I disagree. Why not take to photography if you want perfect lines and anatomical creations? But in art one has to use his imagination and here is where the artist comes in. When I want to express anything on my canvas, I think only of the thing that I want to express. Some lines may go wrong here and there but the composition of the whole expression is my real aim."

Unfortunately, this is one of the few points on which there is much disagreement, between him and his contemporaries in the field of art. Critics nod their heads gravely at his crude lines of the figures and outlines on the canvas. And the superficial amateur cannot go much deeper than those critics who have over-stayed their visit to the art gallery and gone beyond the line of duty in assessing the work of Ara.

"What School of Art do you belong to?" I ventured meekly, knowing full well that this was another topic on which his opinion was at variance with those held by others. "In my ideas on art I have no place for schools. No school has the monopoly of art. I follow no school or master and I copy none. Art is an experiment in the expression of one's own personality, truth and beauty. And truth and beauty are too fleeting to be caught by one



The Grinders

By K. H. ARA

set of theories or schools, however clear cut they may be. If you want to circumscribe my paintings under one nomenclature, call it "modern" or "contemporary".

Looking at his work in a little dispassionate frame of mind, one can assess his work as being essentially independent reflecting the true life of India as lived by its people. To name but a few, we have classic examples in the "Mosque", "Holi", "Dance" and "The Grinders". These are his recent works, the last-named being selected for the Indian Art Exhibition, 1947, in London. His portrait "Youth" was exhibited in the Bombay Art Society in 1946. While in the Exhibition of Modern Art in Paris, Organized by UNESCO, was his "Village Corner". Later the same picture was exhibited as a contemporary of Indian Art at the India House, London, "interpreting facets of Indian life". His one-man show in November 1946 showed to the world of art his true abilities, as also the Governor's prize which was won by his "Mahratta Battle" in 1944 and which, incidentally, was bought by the Bombay Government. Many of his pictures have been bought by well-known personalities in India, including among others Sir Roger Lumley and Sir John Colville, the former and present Governors and Ram Gopal, the famous dancer.



Thirsty Cattle

By K. H. ARA

Finally, I asked him what he thought of the future of Indian Art. Without meaning to be blunt he was frank and sincere in his reply.

“The only future for Indian Art is through the expression of our life, ideals, aspirations, living and thinking. And whatever the ways and habits of the age, they must be expressed in the paintings of that age. The Moghul school developed in the Moghul *era*, Rajput in the Rajput *era* and Ajanta in the Buddhist days are all undeniably great because they express the spirit of their respective ages. But to-day

is there anything approaching the Moghul, Rajput or Buddhist way of life so that we might express it in our work?

Our present contribution must gradually evolve into something representing the present time, so that Art will crystallize into something modern and truly Indian”.

As I came away from him I pondered on his words, his achievement of the strange and unique synthesis of Life and Art.

EDITORS' NOTE

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FURNITURE FOR INDIAN HOME

V. R. Chitra

It is rather difficult to say whether we ever had furniture in our country on the same standard as that which existed in the Middle Ages in Europe. We actually started furnishing our homes after the advent of the European traders into our country. This does not however, mean that we never had furniture in our palaces and homes in olden days. To be more accurate, we never had drawing-room suites or bed-room suites in olden days—nor we ever used office tables or wardrobes. These are all of European inspiration of the nineteenth century which we have adopted so fully that they have a common place in our daily life. We did have in Ancient India couches, bedsteads, thrones and boxes of various types and shapes and of different sizes. There was no necessity for drawing-room or dressing-room suites as our standards of life and our style of living were quite different from that of the present day. A typical Indian home, be it a palace or a village *vakili*, was designed in such a way that there was no need for different styles or suites of furniture. Our old houses were built in such a manner that there was no need to put in a wardrobe or an almirah for all our almirahs were in the form of built-in shelves wherein people kept their clothes, books, and other articles. There was no need for dressing-tables and wall-shelves for there used to be several niches in the walls and there was hardly any necessity to keep a separate table to keep their toilet. There was no necessity for a bed-room suite as such for there was no fixed bed-room in an Indian home. According to seasons the sleeping-room changes in an Indian home. Nevertheless, wood-work in ancient India had reached a very high degree of perfection to satisfy various other standards—for instance, the main entrance of an old Indian home, especially in

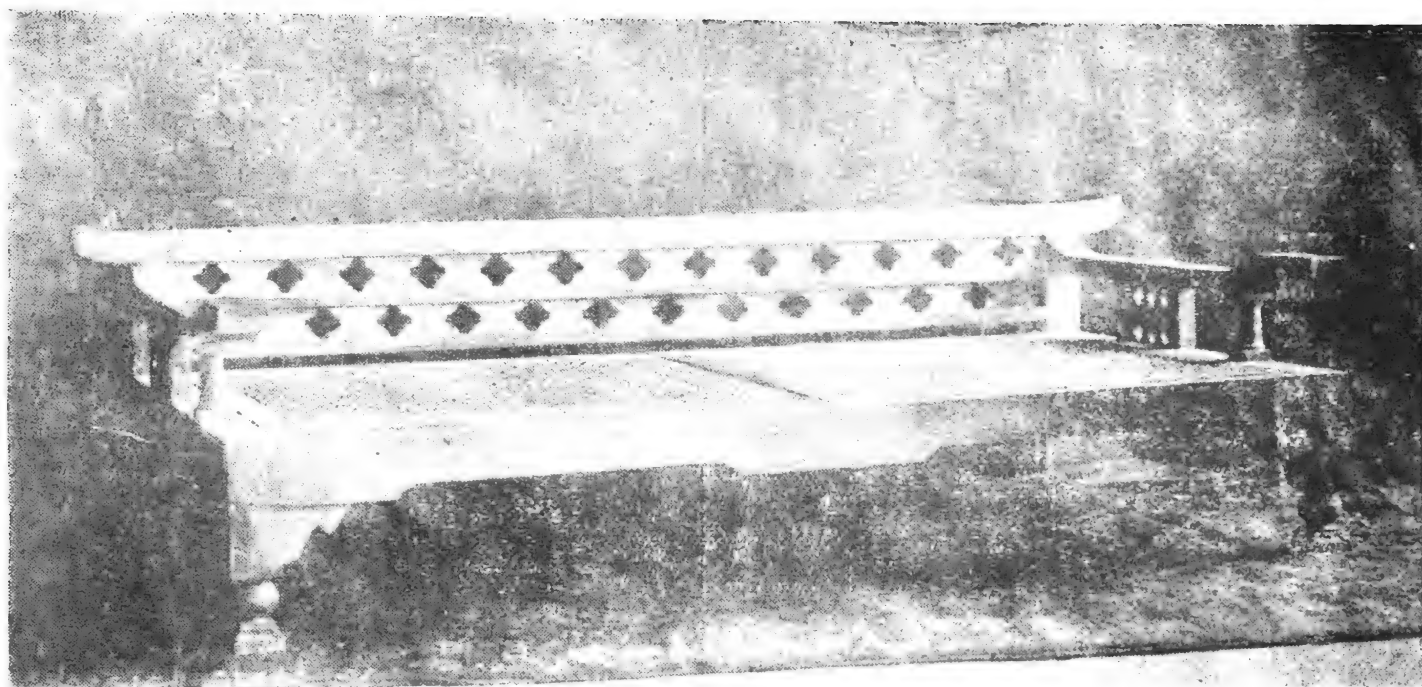
South India, is a work of art very decorative and richly carved. The wooden pillars and rafters in the court-yard of even a modest house are beautifully carved and ornamented. In big houses of two stories or in palaces the wooden ceiling, balconies and bay-windows are very good specimens of high class wood-work, seldom attained to-day.

As a matter of fact most of the Oriental countries with the probable exception of China have never had any special domestic furniture. Even to this day there is no furniture in a Japanese home. Chairs and sofas are not heard of even in a palace; of course there is no bedstead, no wardrobe and no dining-room cabinet in a Japanese home. All that they have is a small and low mirror stand, a low table of about a foot high and both of them lacquered. The mirror is used for dressing while sitting on a cushion, the low table for dining sitting on a cushion on the floor. The Japanese invariably sleep on the floor in one of the rooms which becomes a sitting-room by day. The whole flooring of a Japanese home or even a palace is covered with padded mats of a uniform size and they keep a built-in wardrobe like a big shelf as long as the room with sliding doors which is used as a storing place for keeping beds, clothes, boxes and other things. Japanese home, like our own is scrupulously clean and free of any furniture. The Japanese keep in one corner of the room a number of cushions just as an Indian keeps a few rolled mats to offer to guests to sit on.

From the facts stated above, one may realise why we had no separate furniture though the West itself derived the inspiration and conception of furniture from the East. Yet India had not developed the idea of furnishing bed-rooms, dressing-rooms, drawing-rooms and dining-rooms separately, because



"AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE"



A Sofa
Designed by
A. K. HALDAR

our habits and customs did not warrant any such. Even after the advent of the Moguls, India did not take to specialised furniture for the Moguls who were Asiatics and had no furniture except *diwans* and *thakias*, which were immediately adopted and introduced into the houses of our aristocrats.

But the European traders, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French brought with them gilded wall-mirrors and up-holstered sofas as presents to our noblemen and soon other rich men of our land ordered them for their use through these traders. Till the beginning of the twentieth century, our noblemen were importing furniture from France and England and then a few English cabinet makers came and opened shops in various centres and even started manufacturing some pieces of furniture employing local carpenters to do the job.

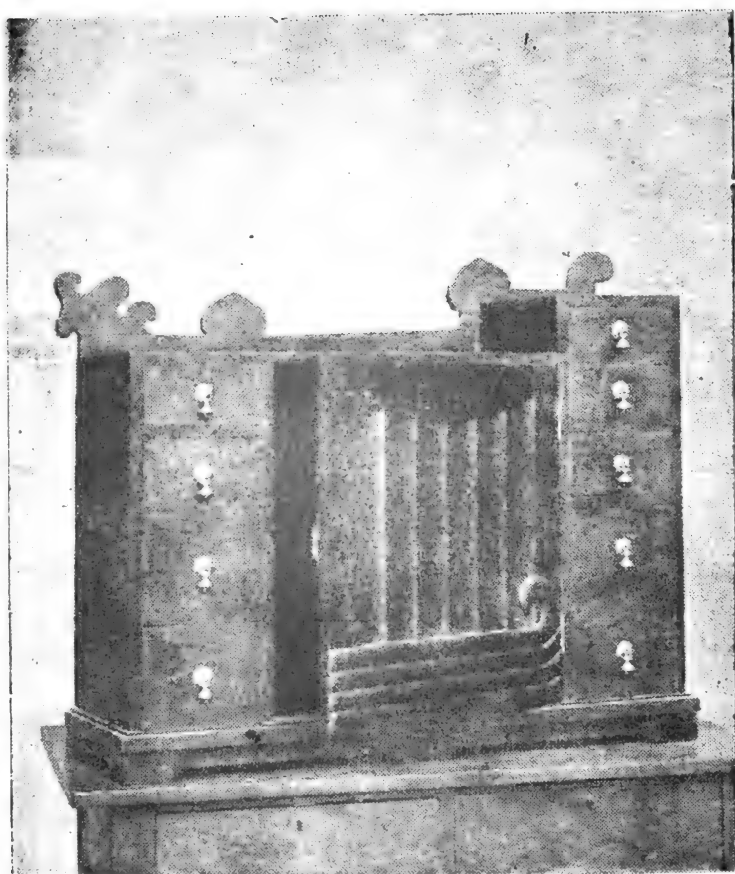
After the First World War (1914) machines were largely used in making furniture, and London-made furniture were exported in large quantities to all British Colonies and India was Britain's best market, as the Maharajas and nobles were anxious to copy English standards of living.

Meanwhile a reaction had developed in India to check cheap imitation of foreign ideas and standards.

Along with several reforms that were brought to bear upon the educated and the aristocrats was house furnishing in Oriental style. By this time Indian consciousness had reached a high water mark with the *Swadeshi* movement started first in Calcutta and the Tagore family played their legitimate part in guiding the national movement along right channels. An Indian Society of Oriental Art was started under the able guidance of Sjt. Abanindranath Tagore, the father of Indian Art Movement.

I do not want to side-track the subject and give an account of the growth and the work done by this Society for the cultural advancement of our country, as I would like to confine only to furniture designing, the subject under review.

Tagores who had their training in Fine Arts from the best Italian artists and musicians were at that time under European influence but soon realised the degradation that the City of Calcutta—nay the whole of India, was under and soon took up re-orientation of standards. The whole Tagore Palace in *Jorasanko* was rearranged with furniture specially designed by both the brothers Gaganendranath and Abanindranath and to their good fortune they had a very able and traditional, South Indian carpenter working in



Letter Cabinet

Designed by POET TAGORE

Calcutta School of Arts to assist them and execute their designs. Soon *Jorasanko* became a place of pilgrimage for the neo-nationalists and art-lovers of India and abroad.

The whole of *Jorasanko* including the Poet's residence were furnished in the most impressive and original style. So, I said at the very outset we have very little tradition in furniture, yet the Tagores with the help of Dhanushkody Achari, the South Indian Carpenter-Instructor of the Calcutta School of Arts, have revolutionised the whole atmosphere of Calcutta in a very short time.

Furniture was designed to suit Indian atmosphere and standards of living—low *Divans* with the side railings to hold in position, round cushions put on the *Divans* and the railings were so designed that they served the purpose of small racks to put on books and small curios. Walls were panelled in Teak with an attractive niche here and a built-in-shelf there in which best specimens of art crafts were placed. In the same hall were also provided chairs and stools to receive guests dressed in European costume and these

chairs and couches were designed in such a manner that they were neither conspicuous nor out of place in the general atmosphere of the hall. Every one who visited *Jorasanko* came out with a feeling that he should change his style of living and adopt some of those simple things which will make his house look more dignified. Thus in the course of a decade the whole outlook was changed, the furniture, door, curtains and cushion covers and thus a new impetus was given to furniture designing and interior decoration.

I was young and unsophisticated when I first joined Santiniketan. After the non-co-operation fever, Nationalism and Swadeshi spirit were at their height with bonfire of foreign cloth and hand spinning as a weapon to attain *Swaraj*. Every student that came out of his school or college during that movement was an active propagandist paid or unpaid to advocate Nationalism and Swadeshi and I, with a little taste for drawing and painting, was one so caught in that whirl-pool.



Centre table

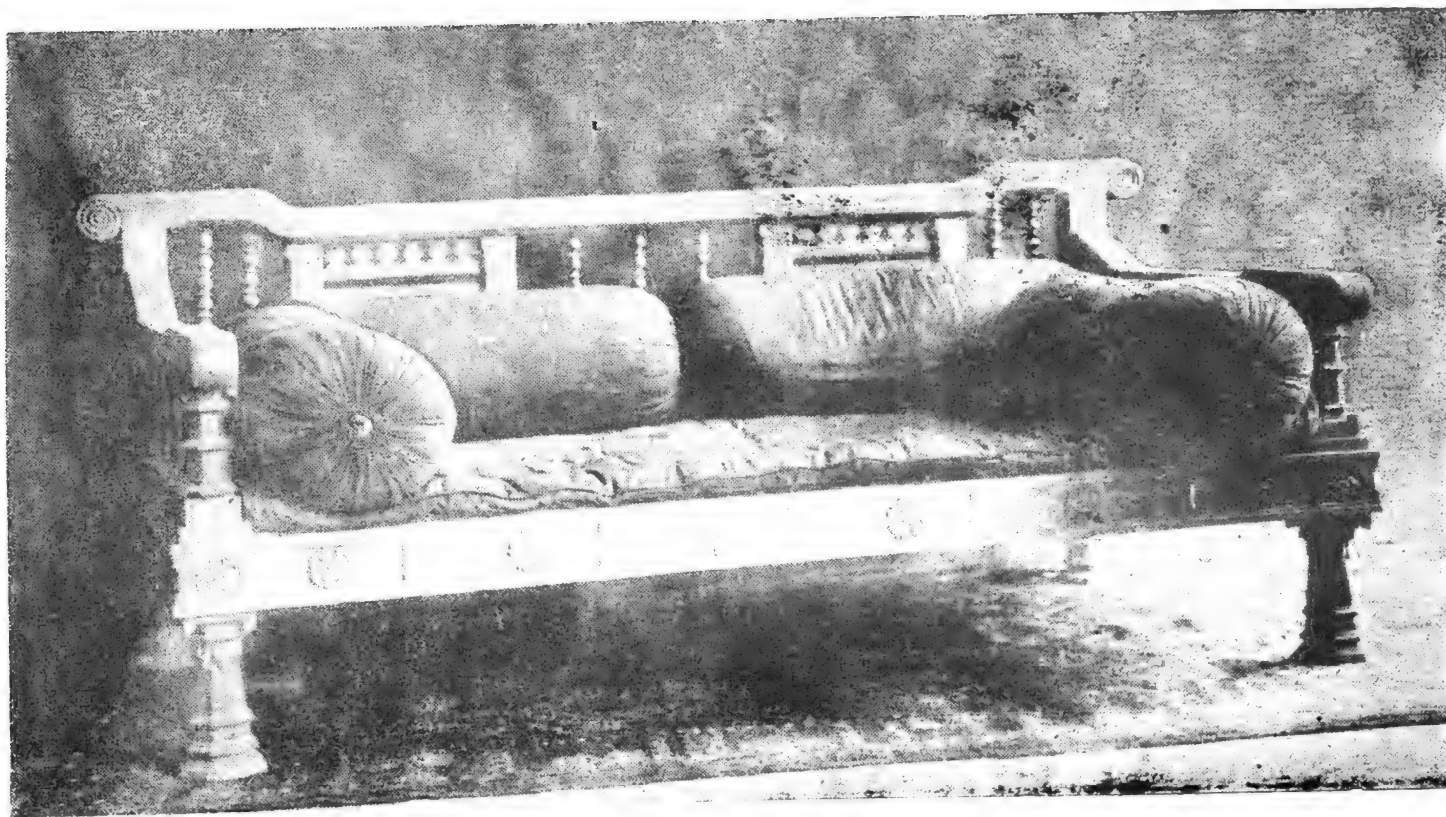
Designed by V. R. CHITRA

Santiniketan was different from the rest of the world that I had known by then; all that I knew of the place was that it was an abode of peace of Mahrishi Debindranath Tagore where Ratindranath was teaching students in a small school called Santiniketan. No furniture was seen anywhere in the place, even the usual class room benches and desks for the pupils and chairs and tables for the teachers were absent. Neither was there an almirah to keep the exercise books nor even a blackboard. In the painting class which was known as *Kalabhavan* there were some mats and earthen basins for the budding artists who were working there. Tagore had clear cut ideas and views on nationalism and culture. He did not enforce them on the inmates of his *Ashram* even to a small degree but he created an atmosphere in and around the place that every one imbibed his

ideas unconsciously. It is here that I grew up as a man and an artist.

Kalabhavan is a studio and not an Art School where generally the hand is trained to draw and paint without proper mental equipment. Mental equipment is to train the mind for creative work with imagination. The training of the hand is to give a shape and form to the creative faculties of the mind.

Creative art is not only drawing and painting but it is in every object that is made by the human hand of a creative artist. We were painting pictures, cutting wood-blocks, sketching on litho-stones, binding books, decorating on leather, modelling for terracotta and designing for jewellery, furniture and textiles. We were deriving inspiration for all the above from the Poet. He was a poet no doubt—but was a greater artist, craftsman and architect,



A Sofa
Designed by
A. K. HALDAR

SILVER AND METAL WARE

G. R. Hughes

(Clerk of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths)

Reproduced below is a well written article by Mr. G. R. Hughes Clerk of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, on the subject of Silver and Metal ware, wherein the author stresses the need for holding periodical exhibitions, so that the improvements made in this particular craft can be explained to the public. We publish this article with the hope that similar ideas could be successfully employed in our own country, when this handicraft has attained a high degree of perfection and requires periodical changes to suit the needs of the modern times. [Editor's.]

There is a tendency in some quarters to say that the Crafts are singing their Swan-song, that we live in a mechanized age where the only thing that matters in every country is export—export in millions, not export in works of art. It is not always realized that the artist craftsman is at once the link with what remains of our ancient craft traditions, and given the right contacts, the pioneer explorer of the possibility of new forms, methods and materials. As a free-lance, he should lead the way in design and evolve the new type forms for mass production.

My recollections of the silversmith's craft go back to the year 1925, when I visited the Paris Exhibition and was introduced to a number of Swedish architects by Lionel Pearson, then on the Council of the Design and Industries Association. All over the Continent, exciting developments were taking place; the Stockholm Town Hall introduced fifty craftsmen to the world by name; in Denmark, Jensen had established a world business based on his own conception of design and, in Paris at the Exhibition, I saw that massive, austere type of silver which was in line with their modern furniture. Plainly there was something wrong with our own trade, one side of which was only interested in producing fine reproductions of the antique and the other in cutting prices by shoddy production.

Goldsmith's Hall had always been a friendly meeting point for people in the Gold and Silver Industry. The Wardens have statutory duties of safeguarding the Hallmark, and the idea of maintaining the standards of design and craftsmanship fitted in appropriately. Several meetings were held at Goldsmiths' Hall between 1925 and 1930, and in that year a memorandum was sent out to the industry "reviewing the present position with proposals for future development". Competitions were started, amongst others for the Ascot Cups and for a Buffet of Plate for the new Viceroy's house at Delhi, subsequently shown at the Royal Academy. By that time, a collection of modern work by firms and designers from all over the country was being made, examples of which were sent to different parts of this country and, with the co-operation of the British Council, to Italy and the U.S.A. The memorandum stressed the importance of absorbing a number of skilled art students into the retail trade. A register of designers was prepared and periodical lectures were given to members of the trade with increasing attendances at the Hall. Their growing popularity was perhaps not entirely due to the excellence of the buffet.

Travelling and other scholarships were given to students and in this way, a number of craftsmen who are now comparatively well-known—L. G. Durbin, R. H. Hill, A. R. Emerson and others—were enabled



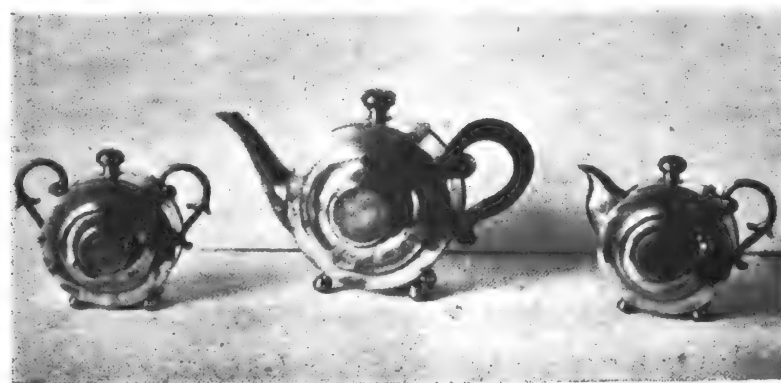
Silver and gold inlaid flower bowl

to go abroad for six months to study under varying conditions, either in workshops or attached to Schools of Art. Many of the students in the Schools will remember the visits we organised to Brussels, Paris and other places. Senior instructors and students went together, and the picture of Dibble walking miles of Paris streets for fear of getting lost in the Metro will be remembered!

Of the Overseas exhibitions, the most memorable were those at Buenos Aires in 1933, to which I was lucky enough to be sent with sixteen windows of silver work, including a model of the Prince of Wales' Bull by Skeaping, various ships models and other things which were designed to take the fancy of the South American public. The Department of Overseas Trade arranged exhibitions in the following years, which included silver exhibits, and in 1937 there was great activity with the Paris Exhibition, organized by Frank Pick and Oliver Hill for the Council for Art and Industry. In 1938, Murphy, R. H. Hill and I went to the Exhibition of Handicrafts in Berlin and were entertained at the Nazi Club there. Murphy had insisted on arranging an exhibit from the Women's Institutes and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the Nazis who wanted to show that Great Britain was supporting their exhibition, employed their own architects to design an extremely clever rotunda at the end of a long vista showing what our Women's Institutes and craftsmen could produce. In 1939, a silver exhibition was arranged in the British Pavilion at the New York

World's Fair, including loaned pieces from the City Companies as well as contemporary work and in 1940, a representative of the Company was sent to America to hold exhibitions in various parts of the country, starting with the World's Fair, and to explore the possibility, of agencies and sales.

At home, in 1934, we had an exhibition of imported luxuries at the Hall to show the type of goods, from high class silverwork to fancy jewellery, with which our native goods had to compete. They made an interesting standard of comparison, taking the coloured wares of the Wurtemberg Plate Company, the fine craftsmanship of Denmark and Sweden and the costume jewellery and odds and ends from Pfortzheim and Czechoslovakia. Then came two Dorland Hall Exhibitions with Oliver Hill as Architect and Dudley Ryder as Secretary. The Royal Academy Exhibitions of British Art in Industry in 1935 had a section for silver and jewellery designed by John Gray, who used leather panels stamped with the badges of the three principal Assay Offices. The jewellery section was the most sensational as Anna Zinkeisen Motley, Catherine Cookerell and others were asked to design special jewellery and suitable display heads for it. The results were surprising to the more conservative jewellers in the industry and are worth illustration, as the questions raised are still fresh in our minds today. In 1938, an exhibition was arranged at Goldsmith's Hall, which summarized the work of the craftsmen of the present generation.



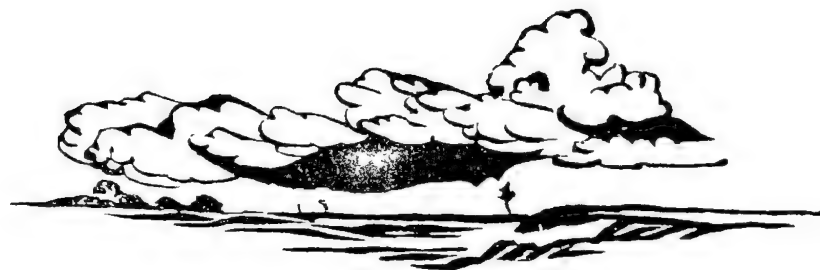
A Tea-Set in Copper

Both illustrations are designed by V. R. Chitra.

Looking back over twenty-five years, certain names, come back continually into our minds; Harold Stabler, to whom so much of the work of the Design and Industries Association was due, could be relied upon to produce a good job for every occasion; Omar Ramsden who showed the commercial leaders in the trade, that an artist could sell his wares; Bernard Cuzner, the great instructor in Birmingham, who has never wavered in his conception of the craft of the silversmith in spite of all the passing phases of fashion; in this he has had the support of B. J. Fletcher R. M. Y. Gleadowe, the art master at Winchester and Slade Professor, with his great cultural background and ability. To him we owe the delicate line drawings on silver objects. The Stalingrad Sword, designed by him in 1943, and made by a team of craftsmen, was a symbol which at that time had amazing repercussions throughout the country. C. J. Shinner is Gleadowe's nearest successor in delicacy of touch at present. H. G. Murphy the experimenter, who, as Principal of the L. C. C. Central School of Arts and Crafts, put the full force of his personality into helping his students;

G. T. Friend, the engraver, who has the great responsibility of handing on his unique knowledge to the younger generation and, lastly, Edward Spencer and Paul Cooper, both masters in combining the use of different materials with silver.

These pioneers have produced a school of younger men who are now taking their places as instructors in the schools and who, given a chance, will ensure that the Craft is not allowed to die out. It is bitter to think that at this time, when a Design and Research Centre for the Industry is being started at Goldsmiths' Hall, the Craft should be crippled by Purchase-tax at 108 per cent. This Centre, where the technical knowledge and research ability of the scientist will mingle with the creative power of the designer, has as one of its first objects the greater co-operation of the large scale manufacturer and the artist craftsmen. Years of patient forward-looking enthusiasm have been spent in the revival of craftsmanship; the Government is backing a Design and Research Centre for the industry; surely it will not give with one hand and crush with the other.



THE PALETTE AND THE LOOM

Prem Saran Nigam

The glory of God and the joy of men are the constant sources of beauty. To extol the one and give voice to the other are the aims to which art aspires. Joy lies at the root of art as of beauty; and it will therefore radiate from every true artist's honest effort. Neither joy nor the happiness that it brings are so plentiful in the world that we can afford to neglect the sources from which it springs. If "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever", there is no reason why that joy should not be extended to the making and selling of it. To scatter beauty is to render service to men; the spreading of ugliness is a crime and a root of further evil. And the only way in which beauty can be spread as widely and as cheaply as possible is to apply art to the articles of industry.



Two examples of Swedish Glass



*Indian Textile Poster by
I. B. DAS GUPTA
from Art in Industry Exhibition*

INDUSTRIAL ART

The importance of art to industry lies in the fact that art is a real force in the lives of the people. It is not a mere trimming on the garment, but the very stuff and cut of our life's daily wear. And as the people's main concern is with the quality and appearance of the coat or dress, the appeal of the products of industry will only have effect in so far as these products conform to the sound dictates of art. The right application of artistic principles to industrial production is of the greatest value to the people as a whole; it raises

their standards of appreciation and their capacities of enjoyment and happiness.

Objects whose serviceability is actually impaired by ornament are seldom worth the nuisance they cause. Leethaby says; "Art is not a sauce applied to ordinary cooking; it is the cooking itself if it is good". The function of an artist need not end after the completion of an article. He has to make it more attractive and charming by beautiful labels and packing, the neglect of which considerably deteriorates the value of the article.

HISTORY OF INDUSTRIAL ART

The value of good design to industry had long been understood in France. The appreciation of these facts goes back at least to the reign of Louis XIV, when the great Minister Colbert gave practical shape to his realization of the value of art to industry by establishing the government factory of *Les Gobelins*. There can be little doubt that this is long standing official recognition of the value of art to industry has in no small measure contributed to the tradition of good artistic design for which France has long been known, and which was not abandoned when mechanical process came to be added to manual methods of production.

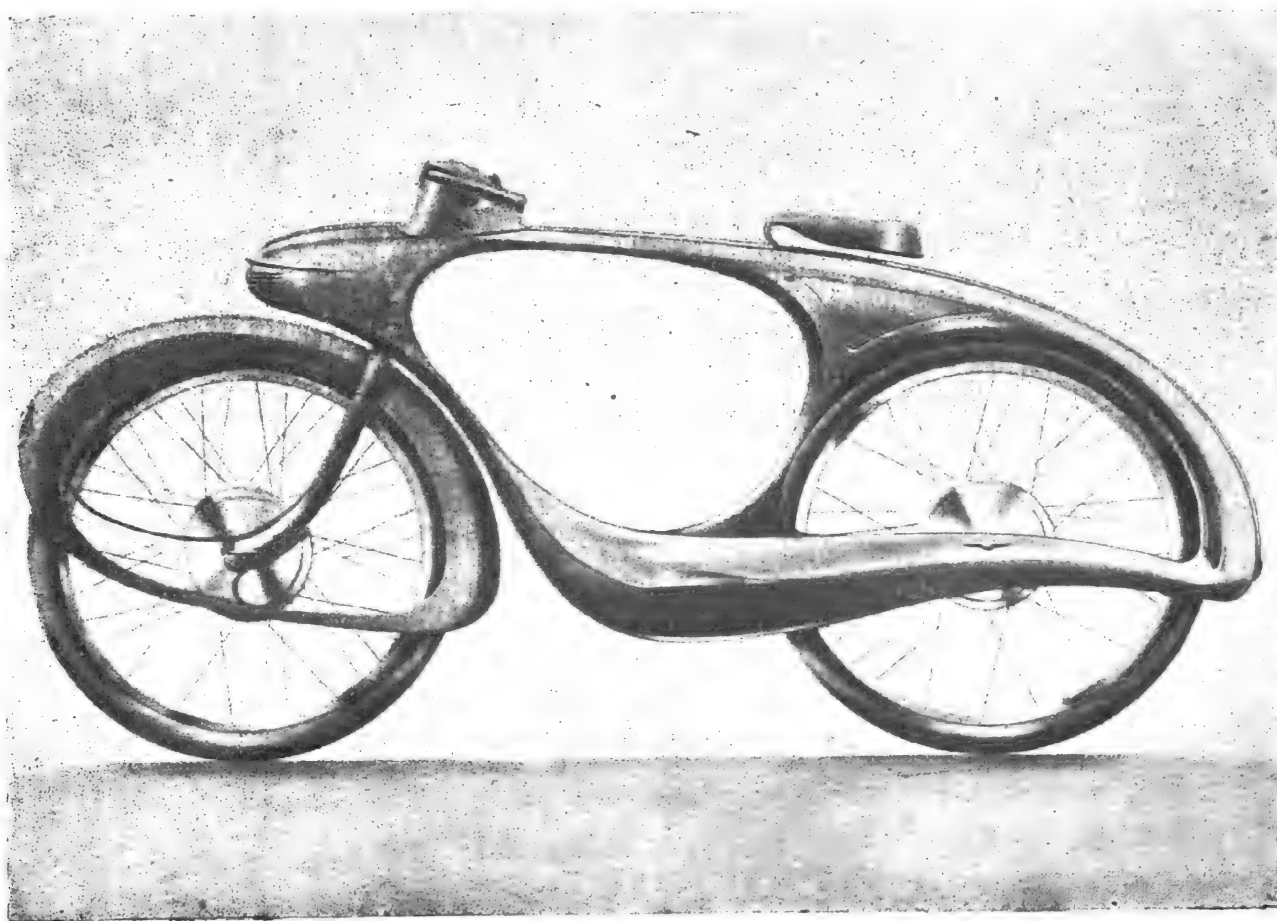
During the hundred and fifty years or so, in which artists have intermittently admonished manufacturers for being philistines, they have all too rarely tried to see their point of view, or offered to lend a sympathetic hand towards achieving the aims of both. Far too often they have remained perched on pedestals of their own and have looked down with

contempt—an attitude out of which no constructive action has yet come forth.

In the minds of the arty-crafty people of the twentieth century, art has the standing of a lap-dog; it is a pretty and amusing something to be petted and fussed over. Were such people a powerful influence in a modern state, all art might once again be enslaved, even as it was enslaved in eighteenth century France by those fanciful and frail ladies of the Court, whose whims demanded that artist should be servile in the great cause of luxury. Real art must be a part of real life, for unless it plays a vital part in a living system, its products are insincere shams. It is when the highly-skilled artist, in love with his art and enriched by long experience of it, associates himself with mechanical production, that we get a hint of the great gifts machinery may bring to art.

THE GROWTH OF ART AND THE RISE OF INDUSTRY

Few may have thought of the number of trades into which art enters in a greater or lesser degree, or of the extent of its influence in industry; and many



*British Design for a
Bicycle of the Future*

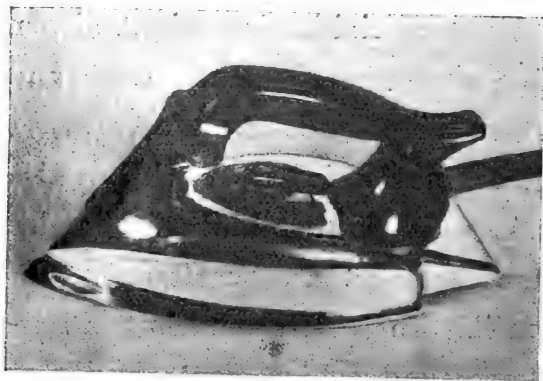


A stylised floral print on cotton, showing the freely drawn design that is now popular in Europe

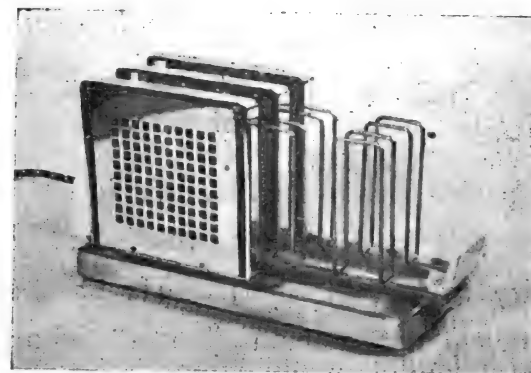
would be surprised at the commercial results achieved through its aid—results which would be even greater if art were more encouraged and more ably applied, with consequent advantage to employers, employees, and the country at large. But it is only too well-known that, owing to neglect of the artistic side of production in the past, our trade has suffered in many directions and has failed to capture either foreign or even the home market. Other nations have perceived how art could help to improve their trade, and they have made huge profits in fields that we once counted as ours.

In Sweden architects and master designers and great craftsmen are in very close touch with the factories that are producing metal work of every description, pottery, tiles, glass, furniture, textiles, and so forth, and in consequence Swedish craftsmanship is far in advance of the rest of Europe, not so much for the individual distinction of its products but because it has created for the cities and homes of the country a fine commonplace in art and industry.

“A good wine needs no bush” is a phrase which might have suited to the traders of ancient Athens.



The electric iron illustrated on this page has an automatic control device.



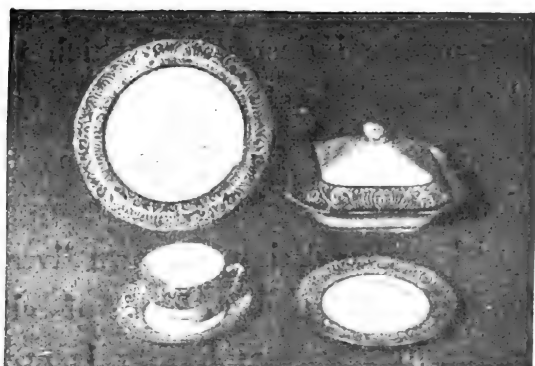
The electric toaster has grids for the toast mounted on runners so that two slices can be toasted at the same time, and then slid out when they are cooked, making their removal a simple matter.



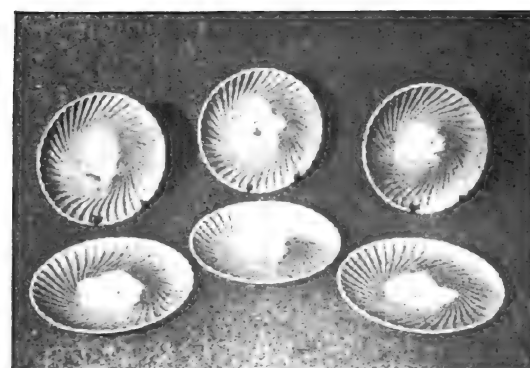
New ovenware in a variety of colours and designs that are at once both pleasing and practical.



A new type Kettle with steam shield marking a complete departure from Conventional practice.



Selected from the products of British decorated pottery manufacturers.



A new process of imprinting hand designs was used in the manufacture of the set of dessert plates illustrated on this page. These were given a "shell" effect and coloured in grey with cream edges.

Nowadays, one of the major means by which industry can flourish is advertisement which is made more effective by the application of art.

Art can also progress through industry for, the artist who applies his art to industry, has the opportunity to test his merit. He has before him a connoisseur (the common people) who is myriad minded and who can be more useful to the artist than all the masters and critics of art.

ART AND THE MACHINE AGE

The erroneous idea of a cleavage between craftsmanship and machinery in the minds of some people

that raises a doubt of civilization might dispense with craftsmanship altogether. But the antagonism between craftsmanship and manufacturer, and the vision of a machine-dominated world, lead us away from the truth, which is that both the handcraftsman and the manufacturer are craftsmen. Both are equally responsible for craftsmanship, and the fusion of their interests and achievements and activities is no Utopian dream, but the most promising road to real progress.

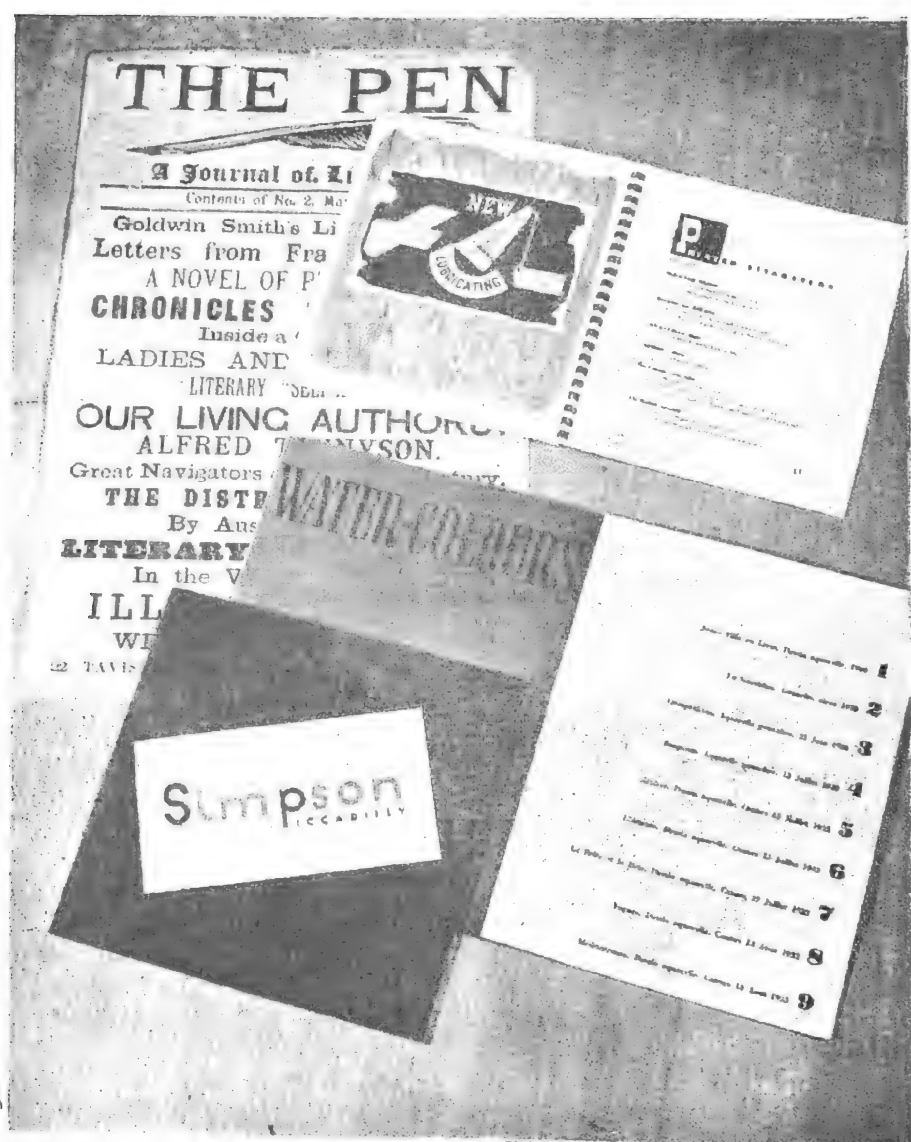
But in one craft, namely printing, the real linking of the craftsman with the machine has been effected, and to-day, of all the crafts, printing, which is one of the youngest, is one of the most progressive.

CONCLUSION

It is manifest now that unless beauty can come into its own again a vitally necessary element in the building up of national happiness and contentment will be destroyed. In neglecting this vital point, namely, the application of art to industry, which has been an age-long tradition in our country, many of our industries have suffered serious set back. It is, however, gratifying to know that the manufacturers are earnestly striving to make a fresh start, in blending more harmoniously the claims of art with commerce. The step taken in organising "Art in Industry Exhibitions" is most praiseworthy.

Artists should realise that they must thoroughly identify themselves with the technical and the commercial aspects of the industry for which they wish to work, and attune their efforts to these conditions.

Is it too much to hope that in learning to design our cups and gas-fires our chairs and lamp-posts, we may in the end learn to design our own lives? Why should we not build up a new kind of civilization based on the machine, where beauty is accepted as everyone's due, and art is not regarded as an almost superfluous "extra" which common people do not understand and only the wealthy can buy?



An old poster and three examples of modern design in printing.

Illustrations by courtesy of Art in Industry Magazine

EXHIBITIONS

ART EXHIBITION IN NEW DELHI

Our Delhi Critic

The All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society has begun its winter season programme of a series of fifteen exhibitions—one-man shows as well as group shows.

The first artist to exhibit his work in a one-man show was K. S. Kulkarni, an old student of Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay. The exhibition was opened by Lt.-General Sir Iven Mackey, High Commissioner for Australia.

In Mr. Kulkarni's paintings one finds an astonishing mass of many styles but significantly enough without an individuality.

In "Chess" (No. 46); "Temple"; "Peacock Dance" (No. 44) and Gossip (No. 45) Kulkarni has tried to follow and adapt the traditional Rajput style of painting. Though one has to acknowledge that the stylistic adaptations and imitations are quite clever and the colour contrasts are well brought out making interesting patterns, it is somehow felt that he has failed to capture the ease, the grace and sensitiveness and mellow colour sensations which mark even the general run of Rajput paintings. The emphasis seems to be sentimental and thematic, which, perhaps is inevitable in all revivalist art in which the artist deliberately puts himself into a mental strait-jacket.

Another feature of the exhibition was a number of murals; "Gopal Gopee", "Messenger", "Toilet" and a few more. They were decorative patterns mostly in flat low-toned colours meant to blend harmoniously with modern house interiors. They make no particular demands on the emotions or the intellect and their value as experiments with new forms and colours is negligible.

Kulkarni's "Headstudy", "Portrait of a friend" and a number of other sketches were executed in a very tight, exact manner, accomplished but they were I think, too frigid to be expressive.

The "Portrait of Gandhiji", "Pandit Nehru" and "Kasturba" done in oils and mostly with the help of photographs were perhaps the most disappointing part of the whole exhibition. Kulkarni failed to bring out the true character of the three personalities. He seems content to be a slave to the academic copy-making standards.

There were several landscapes included in the exhibition, out of which "Monsoon" and "Reflections" were the best as colour patterns with a harmonious rhythmic quality. Other interesting work in modern style was the "Wood Cutters"—a bright colour pattern in yellow, orange, brown and white executed with considerable vigour.

Kulkarni had had a fling at the traditional Persian style also and in "Hunting scene" he faithfully copied the same formula but the result seemed to be identical with his efforts in the Rajput style. A landscape executed in the traditional Chinese style "Samudra" added to the variety.

The general impression of this painter's work is that there is much genuine, if raw, talent but he must turn more towards bold experimental work—experiments in form and colour if he wishes to contribute something really significant. Mere copying of old styles, be they Rajput, Moghul, Persian, Chinese, or any other, will lead him nowhere.

ALL INDIA INDUSTRIAL, KHADI AND ART EXHIBITION, MADRAS



Fondling

R. TRINIDA DE

This exhibition was fifth and the last of the series of exhibitions that were held in Madras within a period of about eighteen months. The first that started the chain was the one organised in aid of the I.N.A. Volunteers, who were forced to stay in large numbers in Madras. Tempted by the success of this exhibition the executive of the Tamil-nad Congress Committee conducted another exhibition on a larger scale in Teynampet, in the same grounds where the I.N.A. exhibition was held a few months earlier. This too was a success from the financial point. Immediately on the close of this show, the Harijan Industrial School, who wanted to raise a substantial fund for the improvement of the school struck upon a plan and an exhibition on a considerably diminutive scale, which was perhaps only one section of the larger show that just wound up was opened for the public. By this time the enthusiasm of the people for such shows had sagged and visible signs of the disinterested attitude of the public were seen by the poor attendance, which defeated the purpose of the collection of funds.

The next was the Industrial and Engineering Exhibition, sponsored by the local Industrialists and

Capitalists which was held a few furlongs away from the new Congress house during the months of April and May 1947. In spite of its being better organised and the show exhibited items of interest, it must be said that it did not attract as much attention of the public as the organisers expected.

The most recent among this chain of exhibitions was the one organised under the auspices of the Andhra District Congress Committee, in aid of Andhra Congress Building Fund. It was held in the People's Park, for nearly five weeks from 14th September 1947 to 24th October 1947. The location was undoubtedly ideal and most central, and the corporation stadium, the beautiful pond and the main thorough-fares through the natural avenues enhanced the grandeur of the show. Srijiut Sarat Chandra Bose, declared the exhibition open amidst great enthusiasm of the public.

The organisers of the exhibition had to postpone the opening date by over a week to suit the convenience of the distinguished guest; in spite of this time gained, on the opening day the ground was not ready. There were still partly constructed stalls and booths and the workmen were found vociferously busy in trying to give the final touches to their work. Many of the stalls that were completed presented a deserted appearance and were not ready with their exhibits. The custom of opening shows before arrangements are ready has been a feature with many of the shows and in fairness to the public this tendency should be stopped. It may also be mentioned that the organisers of such exhibitions seem most eager to sell all their stalls but have miserably failed to give those that have bought these stalls such help as are necessary in making the stalls useful. The stall holders after paying their rents find themselves thrown to their own resources and if the poor man happens to come from the mufassal the difficulty in fitting up his stall is indeed very great. His wares lie all around him and he is bewildered under strange circumstances. The one and only aim of organising an exhibition seems to be to collect money and the promoters seem unconcerned about the other aspect such as the real cause for which the exhibitions are arranged; the educational, aesthetic and the cultural value are at a discount at shows which aim only at selling stalls, to those who bid highest. We find inside such grounds a long series of shops dealing in commodities as soaps, hair oils, bangles, rubber goods, plastic products

and ivory toys—none of them can be said to serve any useful or educative purpose and the public who are attracted more by the promising name of the exhibition and believe to see exhibits of real interest and value, get disappointed in seeing nothing more than “Bazaar” transporated into the grounds. Such Bazaars with Swadeshi articles marked the initial stages of creating a spirit of nationalism among our countrymen. For the first time, in 1922, Calcutta held an exhibition in which most of the exhibits were Swadeshi articles. But times have changed and sufficient progress has been made in the development of our Industries.

Propaganda for Swadeshim was an essential part of our Country's programme when imitation of the ways and modes of the West were slowly taking root in our national life. Even cheap and ordinary foreign stuff was preferred to indigenous products and at such a critical period of our history, exhibitions to promote the Swadeshi spirit were indispensable. Even now exhibitions of locally made wares have a cultural value and an economic back ground.

Industrialists on their part should turn their attention to the improvement of the products and raising the standard of their manufacture. As the national industries are growing, we see the gradual withdrawal of the foreign market and with the dawn of freedom, we must improve the tempo of our industries and in the matter of exhibitions we should change from the fossilised methods of “Bazaar shows” and take to more modern ideas. In this respect we may emulate the methods followed in foreign countries in organising exhibitions of real educative value, as “The Paris International”, “Pan-American” and “Pan-Asiatic Exhibition”. In these the exhibits and the demonstration of shows are of the rapid strides taken in the industrial and scientific development of the country which has immense value to the public, culturally, economically and commercially. The capitalist and the consumer have equal interest and every effort strove to the improvement of the various handicrafts of their country.

On the other hand in our exhibitions even the shows put up by the various departments of the Government which were appreciated a few years ago have become dull and uninteresting. The same old glass jars filled with common zoological and botanical specimens are put in the stalls over and over again and the visitors go round with a feeling of seeing the same specimens again



Bride

by Late D. RAMA RAO

and again. It is therefore time that definite schemes and programme on progressive scales are drawn for holding exhibitions hereafter. In this connection the Government and quasi Government organisations should actively co-operate in the exhibition and it is important that competent officers are chosen for the success of the whole show. The national dignity of our country besides politics largely depends upon our cultural elegance and economic eminence.

Coming back to the exhibition about which we are discussing it should be admitted that there was nothing new or spectacular in it. The usual array of shops like Amrutanjan, Little's Oriental Balm, Ayurvedhashram, Khadi stalls, and a host of other such concerns which are invariably seen in every exhibition were there. The usual compliment of soap and toilet manufacturers, glass bangle makers, and leather goods dealers were also represented. Leaving these, the art section of the exhibition alone is taken for our special attention.

This section was well located in a spacious hall of the Victoria Public Hall, which added considerably to elegance and importance of this section. To add to this the Arts section was opened by that great exponent of eastern culture and aesthetics Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

on the 20th October 1947. The range of exhibits were wide, and in such a vast collection among many good specimens, some imperfect and even a few bad ones happened to get mixed up. There were some fine oil master-pieces of great painters like the late Raja Ravi Varma. It may be mentioned that the paintings of Raja Varma were kindly lent from the collection of the Raja of Vizianagaram. This collection contained such master-pieces like "Shakuntala writing the love letter"—in a design totally different from the more popular much lithographed picture of the same subject; "Chandramati at the burning ghat", a fine study of a "Malabar belle"; a fine portrait study of a "Malabar girl" and a few others. Moving along from this talented artist who formed a school of his own we come across some of the fine paintings of the late D. Rama Rao, Venkat Rao of Penukonda and V. Doraiswami of Madras. They were all gifted artists whose services to the realm of art should receive better recognition. Then there were some fine studies in oil, water colours and an original of A. K. Halder labelled as "Artist unknown". In all, there were over 300 pieces, the display of which might have been better arranged. There was no order or chronology. The exhibits seemed to be arranged according to their sizes on the screens so that they may, when hung give the appearance of a honey comb. The display lacked both artistic taste and a knowledge of the outlines of the History of Art in our country. Another sad aspect of the show was that a

reprint of the tricolour reproduction of a scene from "Omar Khayyam" by A. K. Halder was put in a frame and exhibited as an *original* "Kindly lent by Sir S. Radhakrishnan".

An art exhibition should be the source of the fountain of inspiration to the aspirants in the realm of fine art and if this aspect of the show is forgotten, the ancient and proud heritage of our country will disappear by slow but sure degrees.

Amidst the exhibits there were some cartoons especially those drawn by the celebrated artist Chamkur. One of them entitled "Bhuputri" depicted the deified form of our motherland represented by a young girl with a much coloured saree holding a huge dish with many kinds of fruit. This was fitted on the stage of the hall and was flood lit. It must be said that this piece did not go with the others in the hall. It seemed more fitted to decorate a drama stage. So too was another design "Swatantra Bharati" which was to represent Mother India caressing her newly born child—Freedom. These cheap material may fit in more with outdoor decorations or form a part of the stages for dramatic or dance recitals than fit, in an exhibition of orthodox art. The jumbling up of all specimens discloses the low standard of our artistic culture and mars the eye of an impartial observer. Some attention must be given hereafter for not only the proper display of the exhibits but also in the selection of these for the show. For instance out of the 300 pieces shown in this exhibition if selected by various standards set, only about a hundred of them may be chosen for display. Then again these should be assorted according to the various schools. The paintings of each school should be nicely displayed giving proper space between the specimens and schools. They must also be placed at a convenient height from the floor to enable the visitor to enjoy the artistic excellence in them.

Our appreciation goes with every thing that was nice, and every thing that was pleasing in the exhibition. We have also tried to give suggestions where ever an improvement was felt wanting. It is hoped that the standard of our exhibitions will rise to high degrees to enable us to compete on equal terms with those organised in any country in the world.

"Editors."



Village

K. SRIRAMULU



MALABAR BOAT MAN

F. H. RAULEDER

BOOK REVIEWS

THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN, By *Herbert Read*; (*The Indian Institute of Art in Industry*; designed by *J. Walter Thompson Company (Eastern), Ltd.*, and printed by *Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., Calcutta 9*, Price As. 6.).

This is 'Booklet number one of a series issued by the Indian Institute of Art in Industry'; it is well printed and has an attractive cover.

The text is an interesting introduction to the subject of industrial design; it gives some idea of the obstacles that may be expected by future designers at the hands of industrialists, the fear of extra cost in employing a trained man for the job, the point of view of the buyer, and the various aspects of this fairly modern branch of industrial production. One of the most interesting as well as vital points made by the author is the danger that faces future generations of becoming completely divorced from the raw material with which all necessities are made. He treats of the aesthetic and educative aspects of working by hand on the raw materials and the 'sense' acquaintance that is essential to all of us. Herbert Read is fully aware of what he calls an 'atrophy of sensation' in the way mechanization is removing the large majority of workmen and craftsmen from their avocations. He draws interesting points from the history of design and craftsmanship, and suggests that what would probably counter-balance the present trends 'which might involve the decay of our civilization'—is a Double-Decker Civilization, to use his own words, and he quotes from ancient Egypt as an example of its processes. "In the valley of the Nile there existed for many centuries side by side two types of art entirely distinct character. One, consisting mainly of public buildings and sculptured monuments, was religious; the other, consisting mainly of paintings, small carvings and decorated vessels of various kinds, was domestic. The religious art was geometric, rational, objective, abstract, the other was naturalistic, lyrical, even

sentimental. These two arts did not represent the high-brow and lowbrow extremes of expression within a social unity: they were completely divorced styles, uninfluenced by each other, almost unaware of each other."

This is well worth reading and pondering over.

"M.H."

GOOD DESIGN GOOD BUSINESS, By *John Glogau*; *The Scottish Committee of the Council of Industrial Design*; (*H. M. Stationary Office, Edinburgh, 1917*, price 1s. 6d.)

The role of the designer in industry is that of 'trained imagination', a technician who works in collaboration with every department of the firm that engages him; the manufacturer, the salesman, the buyer, the technicians in the factory itself; not the least important part of his work is a long term in close touch with the raw materials themselves, what they can be expected to do, and what is beyond their range. In pre-Industrial Revolution days, every craftsman was his own designer: he knew his materials and all their possibilities, the requirements of his customers, the purpose of the articles he made, and he had his own sense of beauty to shape his designs. The machine has taken the craftsman away from his material; the machine does the job, but there still remains the necessity for designing an object so that it will suit its purpose, suit its materials, and please the customer. This is where the industrial designer has a part to play in the manufacture of goods today; he is, in a sense, an heir to the old craftsman, though he does not actually manufacture the goods—and he has to serve a master more or less gifted with imagination.

There is an interesting illustrated section showing the various stages of improved industrial designing and the goods that are now made, and in the making of which are combined purpose, materials, portability, appearance,

sales value, cost, and several other aspects of manufacture. Even without the text, this section is worth looking through; there are very good things ranging from textiles to furniture, fancy goods to toilet articles, travelling kit to crockery. "M.H."

PRAYER AND OTHER SKETCHES OF MAHATMA GANDHI—By Dhiren Gandhi, A Nalanda Publication, Price Rs. 3.

This loose portfolio gives six pencil sketches of Gandhiji in different moods as sketched by his grand-nephew. In the introduction to this portfolio Sri Venkatachalam says, "And the tragedy of it all is that even the best attempts by the most sympathetic artists result in a caricature of the man. Nandalal Bose's sketches alone do him justice; the one master-artist who has succeeded in catching the inner beauty and strength of this strangely enigmatic and ugly person". One would certainly agree with the remark of this art-critic that Gandhiji is enigmatic whether strangely or otherwise but none would agree that he is ugly. Gandhiji has a personality of his own, which is pleasing to his admirers either through emotion or affection. However, one should know that he is not deformed or disproportionate though mentally he may be so.

Sri Venkatachalam says he has always been very unfair to artists and photographers and it will not be possible to find whether it is due to his irritable nature or to any other complex. But luckily both the photographer and the artist who had, to some measure succeeded in their hobbies happen to be his relations. Kannu Gandhi and Dhiren Gandhi and their model for photography is the Grand Old Gandhi.

The sketches are very interesting; four of them are his portraits in which certain characteristics of Gandhiji are very well brought out, since the plates are neither numbered nor given any titles it is not possible to comment on each plate individually. The other two plates, one of his at prayer and the other while sleeping are two which have gone off the artists' track and both can only be said to be cartoons, attempting to immortalise him.

The portfolio is worth purchasing in this that it gives four very good portrait sketches of Gandhiji which his admirers can frame and decorate their drawing halls as so far no good portrait of this great world figure is available in the market.

There has been only in-artistic and hideous colour reproductions of him in public places and private houses; young Dhiren Gandhi and his publishers have rendered service in putting this portfolio in the market at a reasonable cost. "Chinni."

INDIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINEMATOGRAPHY—Bi-monthly Magazine: September 1947 issue. Edited by S. Lakshminarasu, Bangalore City. Annual Subscription Rs. 4-8-0. Single copy As. 12.

The above magazine was an old and well published periodical which was started in 1938, but its publication was suspended in 1943 due to paper difficulties. It has been revived and has appeared again in the same pre-war model.

The magazine contains a rich and variegated fare of articles that will be of considerable interest coupled with educative value to those who have a taste for the camera technique. Among them, the article by Mr. V. L. Narayan on "Corner Stones of Camera Art" is interesting. The technique of avoiding the parallax effect in taking photographs of waterfalls is the subject matter of another illustrated well written article.

The activities of the various Photographic Associations in and outside India are given under Notes and News.

We have no hesitation in welcoming the reappearance of this technical magazine on a subject, whose votaries are increasing day by day and it is hoped that they will continue to enlighten the budding enthusiasts with their valuable suggestions. "Teeyennes."

"ATMA DARSHAN"—at the ultimate: By Sri Krishna Menon—Atmananda. Published by Sri Vidya Samiti, Tiruvannamalai. Price Rs. 2-8-0.

This small book written by a true seeker after Truth and published at the request of his friends, on the eve of his birthday in 1946, is yet another attempt to unravel the mystic significance of the famous Upanishadic Sutra "Tat Tvam Asi".

From the days of Sri Sankara, the Brahma Sutra was subjected time and again to critical and analytical study by various thinkers and the paradoxical Sutras were interpreted by each of them according to their philosophical school of thought. And yet the riddle remains

unsolved and will perhaps be so till the next millennium. But it is not to be discouraged that further prosecution of research should be made and attempt to probe into the mystic secrets of the Vedanta and realise the ultimate nature of the *Atman*.

Yet another attempt thus made is the subject matter of this small brochure, written by Sri Krishna Menon. It was originally written in the form of rhyming couplets in Malayalam and the present publication is an English translation of that original writing. Perhaps in Malayalam the couplets would be rhyming and consequently a bit musical too—this has been lost when it was converted to a form clothed in a foreign medium of language.

Yet the basic philosophical truths are there and a close study of them will take one step by step for the realisation of the divinity that enshrouds the "*Atman*"—the Soul. The aphorisms inculcated by the author are highly educative and are sure to offer much intellectual food to those who are interested in this special subject.

The main principle of thought adopted by the author is Advaita and consequently his mode of approach is through the *Maya* theory. "T.N.S."

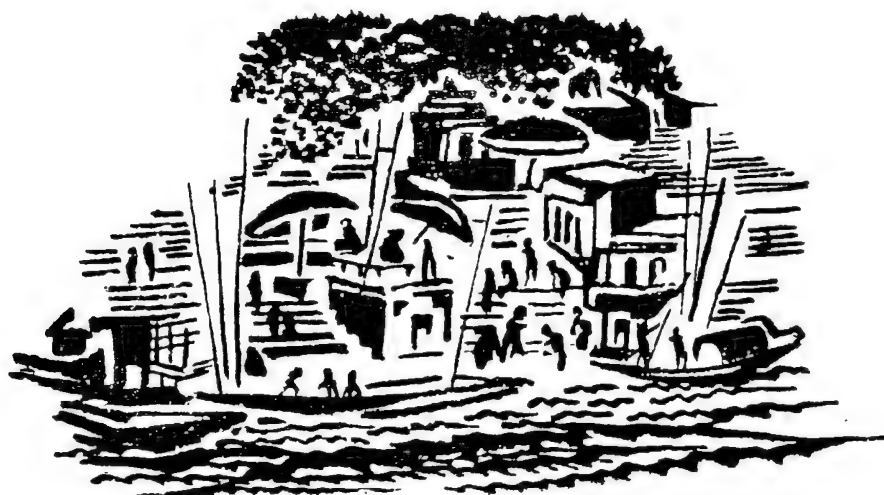
"MADRAS"—*The Official Handbook of the City of Madras. Published by the Corporation of Madras.*

The handbook contains about 300 pages (excluding the numerous halftone plates) of interesting and at the same time very useful matter. The book is designed to give all information regarding the city including a brief history of its development; it gives an idea of how the

civic necessities are cared for by the City Fathers and points out the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. The object with which this publication was undertaken has been stated by the Commissioner in his introduction as follows: "to stir up the civic pride of its citizens and remind them of their civic responsibility in the matter of achieving the city beautiful". We would suggest that, that object would be more fully realised by publishing translations in the two languages, viz., Tamil and Telugu so that a large number of citizens who are not well up in English may be well acquainted with the contents of the present edition. The adoption of a slightly bigger size would not only have reduced the bulk but also rendered the printing of bigger size plates which would have made the get-up of the book more handsome. "Vasan."

"INDIAN CALENDAR 1948"—*Designed and printed by F. H. Rauleder, Published by Messrs. Hoe & Co., Madras, 1. Price Rupee one only.*

We have just received a copy of the above calendar, which is exceedingly dainty and crisp. It consists of twelve sheets, in each of which there is a very fine wood-cut executed by Mr. Rauleder, ranging from a scene from the Madura Temple to a fine study of the jungle king. All the pictures are quite typical of our country and makes one reflect on the past heritage and the present grandeur of our country. We have no doubt that both from the points of view of art and utility, this nice, little calendar will meet the demands of those, who wish to purchase a good calendar for the coming new year. (See page 184) "Tceyennes".



NOTES ON PLATES

“LAST OFFERING”

Tricolour frontispiece

ASIT KUMAR HALDAR.

श्रीमत् सोमपुरे बभूव ककणो श्रीमिन्ननामा यातिः
कारुण्यात् गुणसंपदा हितसुखाधाना दपि प्राणिनम्
योवंगावल्यै रूपेत्य दहनक्षेपा ज्जलत्यालये
संलग्नश्चरणारावदयुगल बुद्धसजातो दिवम्

From an inscription on Copper plate found at Nalanda

The subject matter of this painting appears to be based on the inscription found engraved on a copper plate found when excavating Nalanda which refers to some local incident, which might have taken place in the early centuries of the Christian era. According to this record, there was then a well established Buddhist monastery at Somapura—probably the present Sompur near Cuttack. Here a band of pious monks disseminated the teachings of the great Master, which in course of time, spread far and wide and might have incidentally affected the adherents of other faiths. This monastery was in charge of a pious priest, known as Sri Mitra, who was well known for his severe austerities, his generous heart and his unsmirched character. The fame of this institution might have caused some dissensions, as a result of which some fanatic gang of people from the adjacent Bengal appear to have committed religious incendiarism to the monastery—by setting it on fire. Enveloped with the tongues of flames, the priest Sri Mitra has fallen at the lotus feet of the Blessed Lord and having nothing else to offer to the great teacher, he dedicates his life—now his own and the only possession by an unconditional surrender—what the philosophers call “*saranagadhi*”. The encircled flames should have subsequently consumed both the Divine and the Mundane—but leaving the undying soul still stirring with the throb of the noble bequest.

This is the theme of the paintings of Asit Kumar Haldar, whose name is quite familiar to the readers of SILPI. A master-craftsman by himself, Mr. Haldar

has done this piece very recently and hence it bears all the marks of his magnificent technique, mellowed with age and experience. The forging tongues of flame in the fore-front against a background, which has already been bedaubed red with the conflagration on that side give an effect which is remarkably marvellous. Forming an oasis amidst them, we see the calm, serene face of the priest, Sri Mitra laid most humbly at the cold but worthy feet of the image of the Lord. Even the ochre-coloured robe of the image is tainted with the reddish hue of the flame all around, but the cool collected face of the noble monk is yet yellow—suggesting that in the midst of raging storms around him, he was firm and fixed, unmindful of the calamity that threatens him every moment.

“*BUDDHISM SARANAM GHATCHAME*” is the ideal that the great Master himself preached and the pious monk has well lived up to it and sacrificed himself in keeping up to this ever reverberating *Mantra*.

The colour scheme and the composition of this picture is unsurpassingly unique and testifies to the grand conception that the enlightened artist had before him. Mr. Haldar has recently retired from the principalship of the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow and we understand that he is contemplating to render some of the famous Jataka tales and other famous Sanskrit pieces, like those of Kalidasa in a series of paintings. This would be a significant service that this great artist can render for the cultural advancement of fine art in our country and it may be that SILPI will be able to present at least a few of them.

* * *

“PILGRIMAGE TO THE AMARNATH CAVES”

—tricolour plate

—‘Kangra Kalm’—artist unknown.

The ‘Kangra Kalm’ or Pahari school of painting is one of the most interesting epochs in the history of Indian Painting. In a remote and isolated group of valleys

situated in the mid-Himalayas, far away from the great cities of the plains, there once lived and flourished for some centuries (1550 to 1850 A.D.), a community of artists, whose work became known only after their art had almost died out. They were patronised by the local Rajas, who were an offshoot of the main Rajput line of rulers, who were renowned for their patronage of fine-arts. The work of Pahari painters was almost to meet the local demand and to satisfy the artistic taste of the ruler. Most of their paintings were fine miniatures and though their work was at first portraiture of kings and members of the artistocratic families, later on, they attempted historical, religious and mythological subjects successfully. Then it was that their paintings attracted the attention of art-lovers and thus their paintings slowly found way into the Punjab and United Provinces. At about the close of the nineteenth century, the Pahari art began to definitely decline and the real end of this great epoch in Indian Painting was the famous Kangra Earthquake in 1905, when the entire town of Kangra and its neighbourhood were reduced to a mound of indistinguishable ruin. This catastrophe killed not only the famous pieces of art there but also most of the hereditary artists, who were also caught unaware in the debacle. With this passed away one of the truly indigenous schools of painting in India.

Pahari Art is essentially similar to the Ajanta school, except that in the case of latter, large pieces of frescoes adorned the walls of the cave-temples, whereas the former school executed their work on minatures, which adorned the walls. Both are however similar, as they are essentially an art of line "sensitive, reticent, and tender, it perfectly reflects the serene self-control and sweet serenity of Indian life" (Coomaraswamy). The bold strong outline is similar in both styles and the general treatment displays several qualities common to the schools.

The picture now reproduced, represents one of the most common pilgrimage-tours that the inhabitants of Northern India usually undertake. Amarnath is one of the sacred sites in the Himalayas, just like Badrinath, Kedarnath, and Gangotri. In the summer-months, long trains of devout pilgrims travel leisurely through the silent ranges of the Himalayas and visit these sacred spots. The foreground of the picture shows the rich green valleys interspersed with fast running streams.

Behind them rise the magnificent, lofty snow-clad peaks, in the midst of which is the sacred cave of Amarnath, the goal of the pilgrims' travel. Between these, the pilgrims have pitched their camp for the night. By dawn, they get up and after finishing their ablutions, they proceed to the cave for the sacred bath there and return to the camp before the sun sets. In the picture, we see one group of pilgrims actually trekking across the glacier-covered mounds and crossing over to the side of the caves. At the same time we see too, another batch of similar pilgrims coming up to stay at the base-camp for the day.

The portrayal of this grand scene is very realistic and at the same time quite picturesque. The gigantic vista of snow-clad mountains with the green valleys wedged in between the successive elevations of this great range of mountains, ribboned with fast running brooks, is one of the magnificent sights that all see in the enchanting Himalayas. This scene has been very nicely depicted by the unknown Pahari artist in severely conventional style, with proper vision for distance and colour. Very many connoisseurs of Indian Art consider the Pahari school of artists as the most important forerunners for the revival of the indigenous art in our country at the present day and attribute to them the advent of the new spirit of aesthetic revival.

* * *

"MOTHER" Wood-cut

By R. N. CHAKRAVERTY

A few woodcuts by Romendranath Chakraverty have been printed in our earlier issues of SILPI.

This woodcut "Mother depicts a nice homely scene. The young mother is suckling her little child, seated on a *charpai* placed in the open yard. Perhaps it is a hot summer day. The sparse dress of the mother seems to convey the conditions of weather. The sleeping dog under the tree adds considerable depth to the picture and the entire scene is very well and faithfully portrayed, giving a homely atmosphere.

Mr. Chakraverty is the head of the Delhi Polytechnic and even as a student at Santiniketan, he has perfected the art of preparing nice woodcuts. The one that is now published will appear at first sight, like a fine pen and ink sketch, but it is only on closer examination that one will be able to make out its technic.

"STORM" halftone

By G. D. PANIKER COVER DESIGN.

"Storm" is a very effective and bold sketch in Indian-ink drawn by the artist while he was a student in the School of Arts and Crafts, Madras.

This sketch was drawn with brush on a tinted rough paper with a certain amount of care and delicacy hence the strokes are very bold and are alive with action.

Fine brush drawings in line are a common feature with our artists but not bold black and white sketches. The former requires sound knowledge in drawing and good draughts-manship while the latter demands a great control in the handling of brush and a clean conception of the subject taken for representation. In the previous issues of "Silpi" we have published a few black and white drawings done by Japanese as well as Indian Masters such as Nandalal and Masoji with explanatory notes on each.

The present bold sketch is a very promising piece of work by Paniker who is on the staff of the School of Arts and Crafts, Madras.

From the beginning of the second volume of SILPI (Vol. II No. 1) we have been using a new cover design almost for every issue with a view to show the possibilities of adopting old textile designs and patterns to other lines of trade with advantage. The present 'Cover design' is one taken from an old Surat brocade known as KINKHAB with a variation in colour scheme.

The KINKHAB—with the woof either of gold or silver was only woven at Ahmedabad while at Surat, the variety with gold and silver thread as well as that with silk also was manufactured. This material, in olden days, was used for covering state carriages saddle cloths, thrones, cushions, chairs and couches, and marriage dresses of bride-grooms and brides. The one which has been adopted for the cover is called "*rumal*" and are even today used for covering presents given by princes and nobles. The designs for these are of great variety and beauty. Each design has its specific name by which it is known. The one under reference is called "*gota vela*" which literally means thick line (*gota*) running like a creeper (*vela*), from the thick winding lines which form the prominent feature of the design.





AT THE WELL